



A University of Sussex DPhil thesis

Available online via Sussex Research Online:

<http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/>

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the Author

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the Author

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given

Please visit Sussex Research Online for more information and further details

The Life and Times of Charles Henri Ford, *Blues*, and the Belated Renovation of Modernism

***D.Phil Thesis: University of Sussex
September 2011***

Alexander Howard

What a lot of fun we'd miss if we were born wise. We wouldn't run the risks.
Well, there are dreams we do not remember: but they exist, nevertheless.

—Charles Henri Ford, *Water From a Bucket*

Declaration:

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or in part to this or any other University for the award of any other degree.

.....

Abstract:

This thesis focuses on Charles Henri Ford (1908-2002). Spanning much of the 20th century, Ford's multiform and multimedia aesthetic sensibility incorporated poetry, visual art, filmmaking, photography, and magazine editing. Despite the breadth and depth of his numerous interests and achievements, scant critical attention has been paid to Ford. The little criticism that deals with Ford focuses on his experimental novel *The Young and Evil* (1933) and his magazine: *View* (1940-47).

This thesis addresses this imbalance. It seeks to recover a marginalized poet whose work unsettles contemporary and critical assumptions concerning modernist literary and aesthetic production. In order to do so, focus is shifted from *View* to Ford's first modernist little magazine: *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms* (1929-30). *Blues* made an indelible mark on Ford and informed many of his subsequent poetic and aesthetic projects. This thesis considers the significance of *Blues* and a selected assortment of Ford's subsequent projects and literary career moves. Divided into six chapters, and utilizing a reverse chronology, I trace Ford's various literary endeavors back through the decades.

The first chapter focuses on Ford's poetic and editorial ventures in the 1980s. This chapter re-positions Ford's late work in relation to a flexible and sociable version of modernism. The second chapter focuses on Ford's sociable poetics in particular as it culminated in the 1970s. The third chapter draws on the implications of the second and considers the ways in which the modernist Ford is an aesthetic precursor to the postmodern Warhol. The thesis then moves into the 1940s and 1950s to give an account of Ford's perpetual aesthetic awkwardness. Ford's conspicuous absence in the annals of literary history is attributable to his poetic and aesthetic unorthodoxy, which precluded easy incorporation into generally accepted critical narratives of modernism and avant-gardism. Ford's marginalization has meant that his attempt to renovate modernism has gone unnoticed. Conducted in *Blues*, Ford's (belated) renovation of modernism is the focus of the final chapters of this thesis. The fifth chapter contextualizes *Blues*. The sixth and final chapter offers a series of readings focused on Ford's original literary apprenticeship: *Blues*.

Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank the AHRC for the funding I received from 2007-2010. This funding afforded me the opportunity to visit archives in the United States, and to complete the research for this project.

This thesis would not have been possible without the support, guidance, and continual encouragement of my supervisor, Dr. Daniel Kane. I would also like to express my gratitude to my former supervisor, Professor Peter Nicholls. Especial thanks must also go to my secondary supervisor, Dr. Douglas Haynes. In addition, I want to thank Maria Lauret and the other faculty members of the American Studies department at the University of Sussex. Others have also been more than generous with their time during my project, particularly James Harding who was kind enough to read and comment upon the various chapters of this thesis. Eric White, Joanna Pawlik, Alexandra Manglis, Peter Blake, Alex Pestell, Richard Parker, Sian Mitchell, and Stephen Ross have also offered useful advice throughout the duration of my project.

I would also like to thank Michael Andre, Gerard Malanga, and Lynne Tillman for furnishing me with detailed and invaluable insights about the life and work of Charles Henri Ford.

I cannot end without thanking my family for their love and support. In particular, I would like to thank Claire Howard for her incredible generosity and continued interest in my work.

I dedicate this dissertation with gratitude to Meredith Okell.

Contents:

Introduction: Exotic Realities / of Half-buried HISTORY: a Preliminary Guide to the Life and Times of Charles Henri Ford	6
Chapter One: Multiform Modernism, the Ghost of Ezra Pound, and the Late Poetic and Editorial Practice of Charles Henri Ford	11
Chapter Two: Themes of Circularity in the Poetry and Postal Practice of Charles Henri Ford	44
Chapter Three: Be Careful What You Wish For: Caught Between Pop and a Historical Hard Place	85
Chapter Four: Building Up and Breaking Down: the Perpetual Aesthetic Awkwardness of Charles Henri Ford	132
Chapter Five: What Happens to a Radical Little Magazine: Understanding Charles Henri Ford's <i>Blues</i> and the Belated Renovation of Modernism	158
Chapter Six: Charles Henri Ford and the Original <i>Blues</i> Implosion, 1929-30	183
Conclusion: A Record of Himself is All Any Man Records	231
Works Cited	233

Introduction: Exotic Realities / of Half-buried HISTORY: a Preliminary Guide to the Life and Times of Charles Henri Ford:

Ah beautiful obscurity, with the K.O. kiss!
When the operation's over you'll be oh so hulled;
gape now at the algebra whose symbols cry havoc;
the flower's afire though the spine of it chills.¹

This thesis concerns the life and work of the American poet Charles Henri Ford (10 February 1908 – 27 September 2002). The Mississippi-born Ford's career spanned much of the 20th century and he actively engaged with a number of important cultural and aesthetic movements.² However, relatively little critical attention has been paid to the modernist, Charles Henri. Those critical works that have discussed Ford (figure 1) have usually taken two specific works as their focus, often with two equally specific agendas in mind. The first of these is his 1933 experimental novel *The Young & Evil* (co-authored with Parker Tyler). Often



(Figure 1)

described as one of the foundational texts of queer modernism, this novel is primarily cited in terms of literary gender theory.³ The second is Ford's editorial project *View* (1940-47). The art journal *View* most often appears in critical histories of European Surrealism and American aesthetics during the Second World War.⁴ Whilst *The Young & Evil* and *View* are interesting works in their own right, the focus upon these two specific projects has tended to obscure Ford's wider contributions to the interrelated fields of literature and aesthetics.

¹ Charles Henri Ford, *The Overturned Lake* (Cincinnati: The Little Man Press, 1941), p.13.

² William S. Burroughs once remarked that 'Charles always had a small piece of a big thing'. Quoted in James Dowell and John Kolomvakis, *Sleep in a Nest of Flames: a Portrait of a Poet; a Portrait of a Century – the Documentary Film* (New York: Symbiosis Films, 2000).

³ See Joseph Allen Boone, *Libidinal Currents: Sexualities and the Shaping of Modernism* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1998); Juan A. Suárez, *Pop Modernism: Noise and the Reinvention of the Everyday* (Urbana and Chicago: Illinois UP, 2007); Sam See, 'Making Modernism New: Queer Mythology in *The Young and Evil*', *English Literary History* 76 (2009),

⁴ See Martica Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1995); Dickran Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen: Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde 1920-1950* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2001).

This thesis seeks to address this imbalance by shifting attention away from these works in order to shed light on his career as a whole. In so doing this study offers the first sustained critical treatment of the life and work of this largely overlooked poet, artist and editor. Surveying Ford's career it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the instability of those conceptions through which we seek to categorize cultural developments of the 20th century, in specific relation to the artist as he lives (and works) through them.

How can you be 'post' when you're living it?

In the documentary film *Sleep in a Nest of Flames* (2000), James Dowell and John Kolomvakis include the following exchange between the elderly postmodern architect, Philip Johnson, and the equally aged modernist poet Charles Henri Ford:

CHF: What does the word 'postmodern' mean?

PJ: Well, in architecture, it's a very straightforward meaning. It means when architecture went from doing Mies van der Rohe and Corbusier, to doing historical reference.

CHF: How can you be 'post' when you're living it?⁵

Given his involvement with a number of aesthetic movements that may be described as postmodern, here Ford is being more than a little disingenuous. However, these pithy remarks regarding conceptual categorization provide us with an initial means through which to understand the life and work of this unfairly marginalized poet. The point that Ford is making here regards the inherently problematic nature of issues of categorization, questioning how one might be categorized, or pigeonholed – let alone described as 'post' – whilst one continues to live and work. This point is particularly pertinent when applied to Ford. Spanning various visual and literary formats, much of his work can be at once modern and postmodern: belated and ahead of its time. This resistance to easy categorization is at once useful and detrimental to Ford. It is useful insofar as it informs his inquisitive and ongoing engagement with developments in aesthetics and literature throughout the 20th century. It is this longevity and variety of output that marks Ford as a

⁵ Quoted in Dowell and Kolomvakis, *Sleep in a Nest of Flames* (2000).

significant subject of critical attention. At the same time, this refusal to settle on a singular approach can work to Ford's detriment. Because he appears to oscillate from one practice to another, Charles Henri is difficult to situate and almost always gets overlooked in critical treatments of the 20th century.

This thesis seeks to recover Ford and his work. As we will see, Ford was involved and influential in many of the preeminent literary and cultural movements familiar to surveyors of modernism, postmodernism and the historical avant-garde. In addition, this work will serve as a corrective to the tendency to see Ford as an uncommitted or uncritically vacillating aesthete. In seeking to recover Ford's work it is important to bear in mind that any attempt definitively to categorize his life and work would be fruitless. Instead, we evaluate Ford in relation to several existing categories such as modernism and postmodernism, attempting to better understand the problems he encounters and how he negotiates, affects, and is affected by them throughout his career.

What seems like fragmentation is making all in one:

Bearing these negotiations in mind, in order successfully to evaluate Ford's life and work, we must establish a method through which we can effectively assess his long and varied output. As we have already noted, there is a lack of existing theoretical material relating to Ford. On a superficial level, this appears to be a hindrance to a project of critical recovery. However, in actual fact, this lack proves beneficial. In order to engender a thorough process of critical recovery, we are forced to look more closely at a number of important – yet hitherto ignored – primary sources pertaining to Ford. These numerous primary poetic, aesthetic, and critical works will also be considered in relation to largely under-examined archival material. This thesis will work closely with unpublished archival and biographical materials to help us better appreciate the underlying complexities of Ford's published oeuvre.

Working with these materials, it has been essential to construct a framework that allows for detailed critical study, whilst offering ample flexibility to ensure that we do not reductively pigeonhole Ford. Consequently this thesis will begin by investigating the work produced by Ford in the 1980s, which may be seen as representative of the culmination of Ford's life and work. Interestingly, the final major project undertaken by Ford was a

revisiting – and renewal – of his editorial and literary debut: *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms* (1929-30). As Ford's alpha and omega, the significance of this life-long project cannot be underestimated. By turning first to the final edition of *Blues*, in which Ford gathers together numerous strands from throughout his career – poetic, aesthetic, and biographic – we are able to assess what is ostensibly the sum total of Charles Henri's life and work. Thus, we will be well placed to move backwards through the preceding decades to examine specifically delimited – yet connected – parts of this whole.

As we will see, one of the dominant recurring threads that runs throughout Ford's career is in fact that with which he begins and ends: *Blues*. Like Ariadne's thread, *Blues* weaves its way through the proceeding investigation, providing us with a guiding and structuring principle with which better to understand Ford. However, it is important to note that the significance of *Blues* is not limited to Ford. *Blues* is significant in its own right as an important critical document of what I will later describe as an ambitious and belated renovation of modernism. Recovering the poet, and in turn recovering this important yet largely forgotten magazine, this thesis will document and evaluate Ford's contributions to the investigation and development of 20th century aesthetics and literature.

Tell me, where do we go from here?

In the first chapter of this thesis we will consider Ford's work from 1980s. Rejecting the accusation that Ford was merely an uncritical aesthetic dilettante, we will establish that his various poetic and editorial projects of the decade should be viewed as both a continuation *and* a renewal that helps us to situate him in relation to the wider field of modernism. More specifically, Ford's work of this period – the last decade of concerted poetic activity – helps us situate him in relation to the brand of modernism promoted by Ford's high modernist literary forebear: Ezra Pound. In this chapter we will see how the poetic specter of Ford's literary past persists and haunts his late poetic projects. We will also see how Ford's belated return to the site of his literary origins can be read as an effort to critically differentiate his approach to modernism from that of Pound.

The second chapter pursues this notion of critical differentiation. Beginning with Ford's dealings with Pound in the late 1920s, this chapter moves through the decades and culminates in a discussion of Ford's work in the 1970s. This chapter charts the ways in

which Ford desired to differentiate his projects from those of Pound and other assorted forebears and contemporaries. Breaking with ideas of authorial mastery and modernist autonomy, this chapter demonstrates how the poetic expression of personality plays an increasingly important role in what I describe as Ford's circular and social literary practice.

The third chapter focuses on Ford's visual and literary output of the 1960s. This chapter considers Ford's dealings with another arch aesthetic circulator: Andy Warhol. This chapter considers the way in which Ford's poetry and experimental fiction can be said to anticipate the emergence of postmodern Pop Artists like Warhol. At the same time, we will consider what Ford's productive and engaging hybrid texts of the 1960s have to say regarding modernism and postmodern. Finally, this chapter closes with an evaluation of Ford's awkward status in this fluctuating sphere of cultural production.

The fourth chapter develops our evaluation of Ford's perpetual aesthetic awkwardness, and considers him in relation to three dominant cultural-historical movements of the mid-20th century: Continental Surrealism, American Abstract Expressionism, and the literary formalism of John Crowe Ransom and the New Critics. I want to suggest that Ford's conscious divergence from these three critical and culturally dominant movements accounts for his virtual effacement from the annals of literary and cultural history of this period.

This is likewise true of his first and most ambitious attempt at a critical intervention: *Blues*. In order to contextualize this important and almost completely forgotten modernist little magazine, the fifth chapter of this thesis employs retrospective primary material to assist in our understanding of Ford's resolutely uncodified periodical. Looking to the immediate aftermath of the first nine issues of *Blues*, we lay the foundations for a more comprehensive study of the magazine itself. The sixth chapter moves through individual issues of *Blues* in order to chart Ford's ambitious critical attempt to renovate modernism along decidedly demotic lines.

Chapter One: Multiform Modernism, the Ghost of Ezra Pound, and the Late Poetic and Editorial Practice of Charles Henri Ford:

What am I doing
Here all alone? Reviewing the
Multitudes I've known.¹

This chapter seeks first to situate Charles Henri Ford's diverse late poetic, aesthetic, and editorial praxis in relation to the more specialized field of modernism. It will then turn to a discussion of Ford and one of the major figures of poetic modernism: Ezra Pound. We will consider how Pound exerts a posthumous influence on both Ford's late haiku and the special issue of *Blues* that appeared in 1989. The chapter will conclude with a preliminary sketch of how Ford's final major project (*Blues 10*) might be seen to avoid some of the attendant pitfalls that come attached with Pound's high modernist agenda. In doing so, the conclusion of this discussion also anticipates the general direction of the next chapter.

Charles Henri Ford's Multiform Modernism:

Many reductive criticisms have been leveled at Ford's aesthetic and literary practice over the years. Too obscure, too strange, too surreal: these are the familiar refrains that follow Ford. Michael's Kimmelman's account of Ford is harsher than most and is worth quoting at length. Here is the final paragraph of Kimmelman's review of Ford's posthumous retrospective at the Mitchell Alpus Gallery (New York) in 2003:

Ford was a dilettante, a character, peripatetic. The fashion for him now seems partly tied to his longevity – Ford as a relic of New York gay life in the 1930's – and to admiration for his being publicly out of the closet when few other men dared to be. Also to his multimedia, venturesome sensibility. His life was more interesting than his work, though. The art is ephemeral. Creatively installed, the show does the best it can to evoke Ford's lively

¹ Charles Henri Ford, 'One Hundred 69 Haiku for Charles Henri', *Milk Magazine*: 3 (2001). Online Edition: <http://www.milkmag.org/poetry3.htm#Charles%20Henri%20FORD>. Last accessed: 15 January 2011.

spirit. But absent the man himself, it may leave you wondering what the fuss is about.²

Kimmelman is damning in his faint praise. According to Kimmelman, the current 'fashion' for Ford's work can be attributed to the latter's sheer individual longevity, or, perhaps even more reductively, his sexuality. Kimmelman's choice of language is certainly curious. After all, 'fashion' is a strange term to use when talking about the work of a perennially marginalized, largely forgotten poet.

Kimmelman's reference to Ford's 'multimedia, venturesome sensibility' is of especial interest. I would argue that it is precisely Ford's 'venturesome' aesthetic 'sensibility' that provokes such a strong reaction in Kimmelman. Stretched as it is across numerous decades and many different aesthetic disciplines (poetry, painting, photography), Ford's 'multimedia' sensibility poses problems for those critics who might want simply to pigeonhole his work. Ford's formal diffuseness thus becomes an easily reached proverbial branch with which to beat him. In part, this accounts for why Ford has been perennially overlooked in accounts of American poetic and aesthetic production during the 20th century.

We can get a better sense of Ford's formally diffuse, 'multimedia, venturesome sensibility' by looking at his various poetic, artistic, and editorial projects of the 1980s. Ford's major works of the 1980s differ in both form and content. Aside from his photographs, we have Ford's *Om Krishna* trilogy (1979-82), *Public Haiku* (1984), *Emblems of Arachne* (1986), and, arguably most importantly, his belated editorial return to *Blues* (1989). These groupings are more arbitrary than they initially appear and hint at Ford's 'venturesome sensibility'. Consider *Om Krishna*. Originally conceived as a tetralogy, *Om Krishna* ended up a truncated trilogy. *Om Krishna I: Special Effects* (1979) and *Om Krishna II: from the Sickroom of the Walking Eagles* (1981) are diffuse poetic investigations of (amongst other things) Indian and Buddhist mythology conducted in rolling,

² Michael Kimmelman, 'Art in Review; Charles Henri Ford', *New York Times*, 24 January 2003 (Online Edition): <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/24/arts/art-in-review-charles-henri-ford.html>. Last accessed, 8 December 2010.

Whitmanesque free verse.³ In complete contrast, *Om Krishna III: Secret Haiku* is a more formally rigorous collection of haiku.

Haiku came to be Ford's preferred poetic method in his later life. It is therefore unsurprising that three of Ford's major late works are volumes of haiku: (the aforementioned) *Om Krishna III*, *Public Haiku*, and *Emblems of Arachne*. But as

soon as we try neatly to group Ford's various volumes of haiku together, differences begin to emerge. Whilst *Secret Haiku* and *Emblems of Arachne* do share thematic concerns (primarily about domesticity), Ford chose not to group them together. *Secret Haiku* and *Emblems of Arachne* also differ materially. This is a simple but important distinction. Where *Emblems of Arachne* is a rather plain chapbook, *Secret Haiku* is a beautifully bound, limited edition of Ford's haiku set alongside the line drawings of Isamu Noguchi (figure 1). Whilst retaining a visual element, quite the opposite can be said of *Public Haiku*.⁴ Pieced together on low-cost, everyday notepads, *Public Haiku* signals a thematic and visual shift from the preceding *Secret Haiku*. Where the texts of *Secret Haiku* are offset against Noguchi's sparse calligraphic brushstrokes, the verses of *Public Haiku* are embedded in Ford's own collages (figure 2).



(Figure 1)

Traces of Ford's avant-garde heritage are literally embedded in the collages of his *Public Haiku*. The twelfth haiku (figure 3) in the collection is a good example. As we can see, Ford has pasted his haiku over a low-quality reproduction of a late work by the Neo-Romantic Russian painter, Pavel Tchelitchew.⁵ This collage serves two functions. Firstly, it

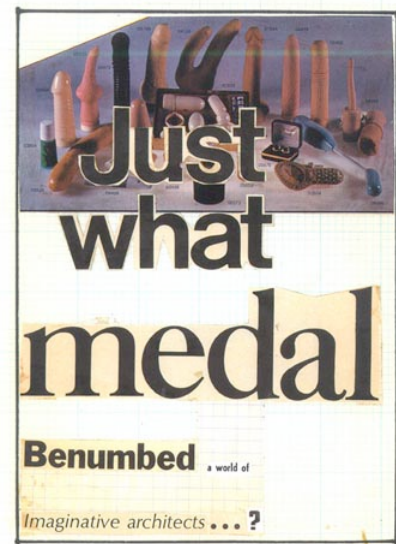
³ For a discussion of Ford's more Whitmanesque poetic propensities see 'Charles Henri Ford', Karen L. Rood, Peter Quartermain, (ed.), *Dictionary of Literary Biography – Volume 48: American Poets, 1880-1945* (Detroit: A Broccoli Clark Book, 1986), pp.191-210.

⁴ Ford's *Public Haiku* can be found online at the Dickinson Electronic Archives: <http://www.emilydickinson.org/titanic/material/ford.html>. Last accessed: 15 February 2011.

⁵ The underlying logic to Ford's collagic haiku paste-ups is typically dependent on poetic juxtaposition: '[t]he thing about the haiku is it's very flexible as to content and the form is fascinating because of its brevity and it can be a very concentrated content. It's the most flexible form of poetry, much more so than the sonnet. I think [that's] the first thing that attracted me to the haiku, but it's not what attracts me now particularly, but it ends up being surrealist because of the superimposition – two unrelated things

is autobiographical: Tchelitchew and Ford were romantically involved for over two decades. Secondly: the visual element of Ford's haiku serves to remind the reader/viewer of his prominent involvement (as the editor of *View*) in the artistic debates of the mid-20th century: in which aesthetic modes like Surrealism, Neo-Romanticism, and Abstract Expressionism all sought to dominate (see chapter four).

However, whilst Ford's collages in *Public Haiku* reveal the traces of his avant-garde heritage, it is to modernism – the twin aesthetic of the avant-garde – that we should turn to in order better to understand the late work of Ford. His collaboration with Noguchi is pertinent in this regard. Amy Lyford argues that critical endeavours to categorize Noguchi have often floundered, as his 'interest in transgressive artistic categories, the heterogeneity of his styles and methods, and his visible interest in mass production and distribution alienated his modernist critics.'⁶ In all, '[t]he diversity of Noguchi's work effectively precluded the possibility of finding a singular aesthetic identity for the artist or his practice'.⁷ According to Lyford, Noguchi's ingenuity and the dexterity of his 'approach to making work that defied easy categorization actually undermined his potential to achieve the kind of art-world persona and stylistic profile upon which the market depends on for brisk sales'⁸.



(Figure 2)

Multiform is the term that Lyford appends to Noguchi's individual brand of modernism. It is a term can productively be adapted to fit Ford. Like Noguchi, Ford was interested in the artistic possibilities of mass production and distribution. In addition, his various aesthetic guises (editor, artist, playwright, photographer, poet, filmmaker) preclude the 'possibility of finding a singular aesthetic identity' for Ford. Similarly, his

that make a whole which seems to be a collage'. Quoted in Asako Kitaori, 'Charles Henri Ford: Catalyst Among Poets', *Rain Taxi Review of Books*, Spring 2000 (Online Edition):

<http://www.raintaxi.com/online/2000spring/chford.shtml>. Last accessed: 15 September 2010.

⁶ Amy Lyford, 'Noguchi's Multiform Modernism', *Art Journal* (65:4, 2006), p.122.

⁷ Lyford, p.122.

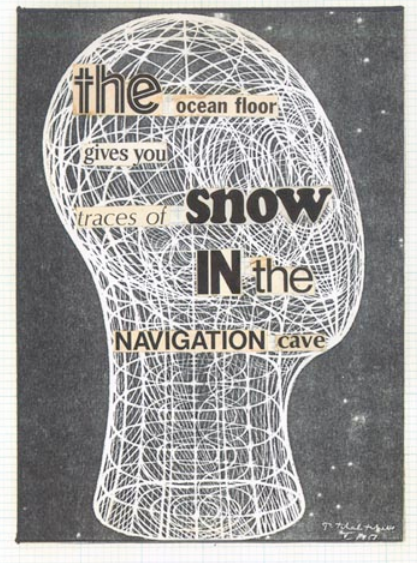
⁸ Ibid. p.122.

engagement with diverse – and occasionally antagonistic – artistic and poetic movements (Imagism, Cubism,⁹ Surrealism, Neo-Romanticism, Beat writing, New York School poetry, New American Cinema, Mail Art, Pop Art) complicates any attempted categorization of Ford. To be sure, these diffuse influences often come to inform and permeate Ford's formally diverse aesthetic output. At the same time, Ford's work often presciently *anticipates* and productively *complicates* the assumptions of many of these diverse movements: it is this fact that elevates Ford above accusations of dilettantism.

Kimmelman fails to appreciate (or refuses to see) that Ford's formally heterogeneous, 'venturesome sensibility' is a central part of his life-long commitment to modernism. Ford's career is

best understood as an unbroken chain of modernist renovations that underpin his quite literal desire to perpetually 'MAKE IT NEW'.¹⁰ As this modernist

imperative suggests, Ford's desire for perpetual renovation can be traced back to his formative dealings with Ezra Pound. Early in his career, before the publication of *Blues* (1929-30), Ford first sought literary advice from Pound.¹¹ The veteran first-generation modernist Pound was more than happy to oblige, whilst also remarking that he had high hopes for Ford's Mississippi-based *Blues*. Somewhat surprisingly, Ford seemed to spurn the advice offered to him by Pound. However, it is easy to understand why. Ford wanted to announce his arrival on the literary scene: he did not want to appear dependent on his literary elders. But appearances often prove deceptive. This is especially true of Ford's initial dealings with Pound. Ford does not reject: he *internalizes*.



(Figure 3)

Om Krishna, Emblems of Arachne, and the Ghost of Ezra Pound:

⁹ In *Part of the Climate: American Cubist Poetry* (Berkeley: California UP, 1992), Jacqueline Vaught Brogan equates Ford's modernist little magazine *Blues* with developments in literary Cubism.

¹⁰ Ezra Pound, *The Cantos* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), p.265. All further references to Pound's *Cantos* will appear parenthically in the main body of text.

¹¹ We will consider Ford's initial dealings with Pound at greater length in the next chapter.

As we will see in the next chapter, this process of internalization has a profound impact on Ford's poetic practice. In the context of the current discussion, Ford's formative dealings with Pound are important as they hint at an underlying anxiety that persists well into the 1980s. Harold Bloom's famous anxiety of influence can be adapted to describe Ford's relationship with his poetic elder, Pound:

The later poet, in his own final phase, already burdened by an imaginative solitude that is almost a solipsism, holds his own poem so open again to the precursor's work that at first we might believe the wheel has come full circle, and that we are back in the later poet's flooded apprenticeship, before his strength began to assert itself in the revisionary ratios.¹²

The 1980s represented Ford's 'final phase' of concerted poetic activity. We can also see that Ford's late poetry is filled with references to his 'flooded apprenticeship'. *Om Krishna* in particular is 'open' to the work of his modernist precursor: Pound. As we will see, Ford's decision to 'open' his late work to his high modernist progenitor gives rise to another sort of anxiety of influence as Ford struggles to make his own poetic voice heard.

Pound's presence is made explicit in first volume of *Om Krishna I: Special Effects*:

The lonely transvestite swooping across a mock
gun battle shines in the dark. All his bones
melt and he's a rippling waterfall of flesh,
tripping and burning while flicking sema-
phore messages to the imps of nostalgia.
'—But it's got your style, Ezra,'—and that's any
light rising in a supernatural harvest.¹³

Ford calls out to Ezra Pound in this extract from the first volume of *Om Krishna*. Ford's aside to 'Ezra' is one of many similar mentions in the *Om Krishna*. This remark is part of a wider poetic and personal conversation with Pound that occurs throughout Ford's late literary and editorial projects. It is clear that the shade of Pound is at the forefront of Ford's thinking in *Special Effects*:

¹² Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: a Theory of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1973), pp.15-16.

¹³ Charles Henri Ford, *Om Krishna I: Special Effects* (New York: Cherry Valley Editions, 1979), p.15.

I fly no prayer-flags we grow accustomed to
 amazement
 I recognize you in the husk of what's to come.¹⁴

Ford's allusion is to a well-known passage in Pound's late *Drafts and Fragments* (1968):

A blown husk that is finished
 but the light still sings eternal (CXV: 808)

Ford 'recognizes' the generative potential for dissemination implied by Pound's image of a 'blown husk that is finished' (CXV: 808). Other examples from *Special Effects* similarly reveal the extent of Ford's preoccupation with the late poetry of Pound:

Arcane manoeuvrings in a clouded-crystal ball.
 Distended kickback of the quick-release
 prong. Wrought-up pushovers require short-
 er feeding periods.¹⁵

The first line of the above extract is another allusion to the fragmentary poetic drafts that close out the *Cantos*:

I have brought the great ball of crystal;
 Who can lift it? (CXVI: 809)

Ford also refers to Pound in *Om Krishna II: from the Sickroom of the Walking Eagles*:

The Synthesis is what I made and what has made
 me
 But love lasts longer than fame for many another
 Whatever the waves are saying will be cradled by
 the wind
 Leaving skull-silver mirrors to keep you wondering¹⁶

This extract contains numerous allusions to Pound's late *Cantos*. Ford's mention of the wind-cradled waves refers back to the first canto ('CX') of *Draft & Fragments*. The opening

¹⁴ Ford, *Om Krishna I: Special Effects*, p.14.

¹⁵ Ibid. p.15.

¹⁶ Charles Henri Ford, *Om Krishna II: from the Sickroom of the Walking Eagles* (New York: Cherry Valley Press, 1981), unpaginated.

movement of *Drafts & Fragments* is famously characterized by wave-like, generative motion: 'paw-flap, wave-tap, / that is gaiety' (CX: 791). Ford's lines can be read as an allusion to the buffeting force created when wave and wind coalesce in the opening passage of *Drafts & Fragments*: where the 'crest runs on the wall' of the 'wind sway' (CX: 791). Similarly, an echo of Pound's later evocation of the 'hall of mirrors' (CXIV: 807) at Versailles can be found in Ford's mention of 'skull-silver mirrors to keep you wondering'. Finally, consider Ford's assertion that 'The Synthesis is what I made and what has made / me' in relation to these lines of Pound:

Let the Gods forgive what I
 have made
Let those I love try to forgive
 what I have made (CXVII: 816)

Pound's *Drafts & Fragments* are suffused with regret and despair:

Tho' my errors and wrecks lie about me.
And I am not a demigod,
I cannot make it cohere.
If love be not in the house there is nothing (CXVI: 810)

Having registered his profound disappointment, Pound then retreats into 'a nice quiet paradise / over the shambles' (CXVI: 810) at the end of the *Drafts & Fragments*.

Ford beats an equivalent retreat in *Om Krishna III: Secret Haiku*. Where the first two volumes of *Om Krishna* featured a panoramic sweep of diverse and often exotic geographical locations (Times Square, Tangiers, Istanbul, Old Calcutta, Konarah, Austin, et al), Ford plumps for an altogether more stable spatial setting in *Secret Haiku*: the humble home. Ford's schooling in the interrelated fields of modernism and avant-gardism inform his choice of domestic setting. According to Anthony Vidler, the ideological shape of modernism is spatial. 'Space, more even than function, became a limit term for modernity, not least for its connection with time both before and after Einstein'.¹⁷ Indeed, '[f]or most modernist architects, space was universal, and was intended to flood both public and

¹⁷ Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001), p.143.

private realms equally'.¹⁸ Much like their architectural contemporaries Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier, modernist artists were also deeply committed to an investigation of space: public and private. This was especially true of Surrealist artists like Giorgio de Chirico, Louis Aragon (in *Pasyan de Paris*), and Salvador Dalí. Given the Surrealist focus on subjective – or private – experience, it was only logical that domestic architectural space often featured prominently in their art. As in Dalí's canvas-sized 'soluble habitations', the Surrealist favored 'exploration of "unhomely" houses precisely for their sexual and shock effect'.¹⁹ To be sure, there are moments of characteristically surreal 'shock' and juxtaposition that are designed to 'Break up conventional / Modes of perception'²⁰ in Ford's late haiku. However, unlike his Surrealist forebears, Ford celebrates the tranquility of the home in his late haiku.

In this regard, the model of Ford's late haiku appears more Poundian than Surreal. Ford's interrelated late haiku are formally, thematically, and conceptually indebted to Pound's final collection of *Cantos*. As is well known, the formally provisional *Drafts & Fragments* represented a final concerted effort on the elderly Pound's part to furnish his epic poem with a suitably grand, paradisaal ending. These highly emotive poetic texts also read as an idiosyncratic attempt to fashion a stable – and tranquil – aesthetic vantage point from which the decidedly world-weary creator of the *Cantos* might quietly reflect on his life's work. The remarkable opening canto of the *Drafts & Fragments* sequence finds Pound at rest in a peaceful and 'quiet house' (CX: 791), inspired by the Byzantine basilica situated on the lagoon island Torcello. Pound makes it clear that he does not want to disturb the tranquility of this 'quiet' Venetian domicile in the opening lines of *Drafts & Fragments*. We find the elderly – and housebound – Pound in a reconciliatory mood in the opening passages of canto CX. Downplaying his longstanding interest in conceptions of cultural and political totalitarianism, Pound declares that he is 'all for Verkehr without tyranny' (CX: 791). Pound's ostensibly contrite gesture denotes a dramatic shift in poetic emphasis in his final group of *Cantos*. Absent is the syntactically rebarbative and ideologically conspiratorial verse that dominated in the preceding sections: *Rock-Drill* (1955) and

¹⁸ Vidler, *Warped Space*, p.143.

¹⁹ Ibid. p.147.

²⁰ Charles Henri Ford, *Om Krishna III: Secret Haiku* (New York: The Red Ozier Press, 1982), p.21.

Pound delights in the simple pleasures afforded by the natural world in these lines. However, poetic images celebrating the invigorating forces of natural motion – displayed in lines such as ‘che paion’ si al vent’ (CX: 791) – are soon struck ‘dumb’ (CX: 791) by an encroaching notion of almost funereal fixity:

Laurel bark sheathing the fugitive,
a day’s wraith unrooted?
Neath this altar now Endymion lies (CX: 793)

This tonal shift relates to Pound’s earlier evocation of ‘2Hår-2la-1llü 3k’ö’ (CX: 791). The ceremony of the indigenous Na-khi tribe of Southwest China at first seems to correspond with the previously mentioned forces of generative motion that Moramarco associates with canto CX. The phrase ‘2Hår-2la-1llü 3k’ö’ can be translated as ‘wind sway perform’ and Pound is keen to emphasize such a fact, describing it as the ‘2Hår-2la-1llü 3k’ö’ / of the wind sway’ (CX: 791). But it is equally important to note that this particular ceremony is one in which is ‘the demons of suicide are invited, propitiated and exorcised.’²⁴ The ominous undertones attached to the rituals of the Na-khi temper the overall tone of canto CX. The initial tranquility of *Drafts & Fragments* subsequently gives way to Pound’s melancholy admission that if ‘love be the cause of hate, / something is twisted’ (CX: 794). The reader is confronted with numerous images of sterility as ‘bare trees walk on the skyline’ (CX: 794) and of reversal: ‘mountain sunset inverted’ (CX: 794). The contradictory, fluctuating form of this increasingly morose canto is perhaps most fully embodied in the following passage:

Falling spiders and scorpions,
Give light against falling poison,
A wind of darkness hurls against forest
the candle flickers
is faint
Lux enim –
Versus this tempest. (CX: 795)

The ‘falling’ creatures featured in the first line of this passage provide protection and ‘give light’ against an unidentified form of ‘falling’ poison. The portentous tone of the passage is

²⁴ William Cookson, *A Guide to The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (London: Anvil Press, 2001), p.265.

emphasized by the 'wind of darkness' that is being violently 'hurled' against the forest. The apparently unrelated image of the flickering candle that follows in the fifth line reinforces this negative perspective; and the illumination provided by the light – or perhaps better, the life sustaining – candle buffeted by the blustering winds is worryingly 'faint'.

How can we account for the sudden appearance of the raging 'tempest' that threatens completely to overwhelm the tranquil scene evoked at the very outset of *Drafts & Fragments*? The unexpected and rather morbid answer has much to do with Pound's earlier conception of Imagism. It is important to bear in mind that Pound breaks with dense historical and economic didacticism and belatedly returns to the formal and conceptual precepts of Imagism in the *Drafts & Fragments*. Often characterized by a startling 'sense of sudden liberation',²⁵ Pound's fragmentary poetic drafts are replete with patently imagistic details that direct our attention to 'the blue flash and the moments / benedetta' (CXVII: 815). These lucid final cantos feature a strikingly high proportion of radiant poetic nodes and unsullied imagistic clusters which recall an earlier period 'when the snow was like sea foam / Twilit sky leaded with elm bows' (CXVII: 815). Whilst this imagistic respite comes as a relief to the committed reader of the programmatic and otherwise obscure late *Cantos*, one must also recognize that it carries with it attendant, implicitly cadaverous connotations.

Imagism arose out of a profound sense of cultural and poetic dissatisfaction. Precocious first generation modernists such as Pound, H.D., and Richard Aldington had grown tired of the ornate verbiage and clichéd linguistic discursiveness prevalent in the stereotypical romantic poetry of their Victorian predecessors (and their Georgian contemporaries). Reacting against this, the so-called Imagist poets developed a style of unsentimental, rigorously precise, and classically inflected writing that stressed syntactical exactitude. Imagism arguably changed the course of 20th century literature and aesthetics. Daniel Tiffany posits that the Imagist aesthetic 'is exemplary in the sense that it entails and portrays the conversion of literary Decadence into a formation of the avant-garde—a metamorphosis that is reiterated in countless other manifestations of modernism'.²⁶

²⁵ Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays* (New York: New Directions, 1968), p.4.

²⁶ Daniel Tiffany, *Radio Corpse: Imagism and the Cryptaesthetic of Ezra Pound* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1995), p.20.

Imagism certainly played a crucial role in Pound's poetic development. Tiffany argues that the initial 'emergence' of Imagism in Pound's literary career 'coincides with his repudiation of what he calls the "corpse language" of late Victorian poetry (which includes most of his early poems)'.²⁷ Tiffany reasons that the famous formulation of the modernist 'Image' in 1912 was at the forefront of Pound's early attempts to 'rid his work of an illicit—and obviously Decadent—infatuation with dead bodies and ghosts, which in turn sustains a poetic language exemplified by these figures'.²⁸

Tiffany describes Imagism 'as a largely unsuccessful attempt by Pound to bury—that is, to modernize—his earlier and more archaic conceptions of the Image'.²⁹ Tiffany suggests that Pound's morbid 'infatuation' with deathly Decadent poetic tropes persists long after the collapse of Imagism in 1916. Tiffany asserts that a residual – and decidedly Decadent – hidden 'corpse language' underwrites all of Pound's post-Imagist poetry (including the distinctly imagistic *Drafts & Fragments*). The presence of this residual corpse language is indicative of 'a preoccupation with death and memory that impedes [Pound's] formalist agenda'.³⁰ Residual textual traces and poetic emblems of this corpse language persist in the *Drafts & Fragments*. The ghostly and suicidal figures that populate the poetic landscape of this final collection of cantos preclude the possibility of achieving aesthetic tranquility and impede Pound's drive toward formal limpidity. Pound's belated imagistic homecoming proves similarly problematic and somewhat ironic. Indeed, we might even say that Pound's late approximation of Imagism is inexorably fraught and poetically painful. This is because Pound is tacitly aware of the fact that he is belatedly returning to the compromised poetic form – and thus the originary scene of his largely unsuccessful attempt to rid his early verse of illicit infatuations – that was designed to combat the decadent and deathly focus that begins to dominate in the increasingly morbid *Drafts & Fragments*.

Pound's debilitating obsession with death and memory also comes to the fore in times of personal crisis.³¹ We get a better sense of the personal impact of Pound's deathly

²⁷ Tiffany, *Radio Corpse*, p.20.

²⁸ Ibid. p.20.

²⁹ Ibid. p.53.

³⁰ Ibid. p.20.

³¹ Pound's conflicted response to the traumatic death of the Vorticist sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891-1915) is a case in point. Tiffany suggests that Pound's 1916 memoir of his Vorticist compatriot is

preoccupations when considering the conflicted compositional background surrounding the deceptively tranquil *Drafts & Fragments*. As is well known, Pound encountered many difficulties whilst arranging what was to become his last collection of *Cantos*.³² Peter Stoicheff contends that 'Pound's composition of them [was] inseparable from his sense of his long poem's imminent close and [was] shaped and troubled by that horizon'.³³ At the same time, the singularly daunting prospect of bringing the *Cantos* to a possible close was complicated by Pound's increasing awareness of his own mortality. Pound's uneasy recognition of this inescapable fact – alluded to in lines such as 'The hells move in cycles, / No man can see his own end (CXIII: 801) – combine to cast the *Drafts & Fragments* into disarray.

Understanding the myriad complexities and contradictions at work in Pound's final collection of *Cantos* is important as it aids our appreciation of Ford's equally conflicted *Secret Haiku* and *Emblems of Arachne*. Ford's desire to engage with the inherently problematic *Drafts & Fragments* in his collections of haiku has a number of unexpected poetic and theoretical consequences. Ford effectively internalizes the various lessons, mistakes, 'errors and wrecks' (CXVI: 810) previously outlined in Pound's *Drafts & Fragments*. Chief amongst these internationalizations is Tiffany's aforementioned conception of a specifically Poundian sort of residual corpse language. However, in order to understand how and why this principally hidden process of poetic internalization occurs in *Secret Haiku* and *Emblems of Arachne*, we need first to grasp the fact that Ford's complex engagement with the aged Pound of the ghostly *Drafts & Fragments* was, in a sense, completely inevitable. Paraphrasing and adapting Bloom, we might say Ford's engagement with Pound in *Secret Haiku* and *Emblems of Arachne* is underpinned by a seemingly compulsive desire to hold his mature poems up to his venerated modernist precursor's late work, so much so 'that at first we might believe the wheel has come full circle, and that we are back in the later poet's flooded apprenticeship, before his strength began to assert itself in the revisionary ratios' (Bloom).

'a literary crypt, a place that is haunted by the return of the young sculptor (in the form of images from the past), but also by the return of the spectral Image to Pound's thinking about poetry'. Ibid. 89.

³² Detailed accounts of the historical events surrounding the composition and eventual publication of Pound's *Drafts & Fragments* can be found in Peter Stoicheff, *The Hall of Mirrors: Drafts & Fragments and the End of Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Ann Arbor: Michigan UP, 1995) and Ronald Bush, "'Unstill, Ever Turning": The Composition of Ezra Pound's *Drafts & Fragments*', *Text* (7: 1994), pp. 397-422.

³³ Peter Stoicheff, *The Hall of Mirrors: Drafts & Fragments and the End of Ezra Pound's Cantos* (Ann Arbor: Michigan UP, 1995), p.3.

Ford's chosen poetic form is important in this regard. Ford's use of haiku can be read as an implicitly modernistic gesture. Pound famously looked to the concise form of the Japanese haiku whilst developing his precise poetics of Imagism. Ford would have been well aware of the well-documented links between 20th century poetic modernism and the classical Japanese haiku. Ford uses haiku in order to align himself Pound. Ford does this in an attempt to reassert his modernist credentials. However, it is important to recognize that Ford's fondness for the imagistic – and thus implicitly modernistic – form of the haiku proves problematic. Imagism comes with host of negative connotations. Tiffany argues that 'influence of Japanese haiku on Imagism [...] can be understood as an exotic means of formalizing a dignifying a poetic suicide'.³⁴ In Tiffany's estimation, 'distilled to a handful of syllables, the Imagist poem derives its power from its resistance to language, from the perilous condition of its own medium—a form that is inherently self-destructive'.³⁵ Tiffany's comments about the self-destructive aspects of poetic Imagism are worth bearing in mind when considering Ford's formally 'distilled', imagistic haiku of the 1980s. As we will see, a deathly and destructive corpse language soon begins to creep into *Secret Haiku* and *Emblems of Arachne*. Significantly, the corpse language is highly reminiscent of the sort that we previously identified at work in his predecessor's *Drafts & Fragments*.

Ford certainly holds his late haiku up to his modernistic precursor's imagistic *Drafts & Fragments*. *Secret Haiku* and *Emblems of Arachne* share a number of thematic concerns with Pound's final collection of *Cantos*. Like Pound, Ford wants to establish a stable – and tranquil – vantage point from which to contemplate his literary career. Much as it did for the aged and housebound Pound in *Drafts & Fragments*, domestic space comes to dominate in Ford's late modernist haiku. Sometimes the sanctity of the domestic enclave (along with the attached garden) is figured in relation to the natural world:

He took honey from
The walls of his house—that's where
The bees hide their lives.³⁶

³⁴ Tiffany, *Radio Corpse*, p.48.

³⁵ Ibid. p.48.

³⁶ Ford, *Om Krishna III: Secret Haiku*, p.14.

The same can also be said of the following haiku. In lines that recall Pound's wonderment at the processes of the natural world in the opening canto of *Drafts & Fragments*, Ford delights in satisfyingly simple feats of organic beauty in the ostensibly tranquil domestic textual enclave provided by *Secret Haiku*:

The bedraggled rose
The young gardener brought
Has become a beauty.³⁷

Ford also equates domestic space with security and sensuality in *Secret Haiku*:

Like a wild bird
He sees there's nothing to be afraid of
In my room.³⁸

In keeping with the mystical propensities of the earlier volumes of *Om Krishna*, the comfort of the tranquil domestic enclave is also infused with quasi-spiritual potentiality in *Secret Haiku*:

Who walks barefoot in
The house with dusty floors?
Unexpected Glory.³⁹

Like the preceding *Secret Haiku*, *Emblems of Arachne* is rooted in the realm of the domestic:

Indra; my house; the
Garden. A work of fiction,
Assembled by me.⁴⁰

Much like the generative and limpid opening lines of Pound's *Drafts & Fragments*, Ford's tone in the domestic haiku of *Emblems of Arachne* is similarly relaxed and often playful:

³⁷ Ibid. p.12.

³⁸ Ibid. p.20. Nb. This sensual passage finds a poetic correlative in Pound's *Drafts & Fragments*: 'Foam and silk are thy fingers, / Kuanon / and the long suavity of her moving' (CX: 792).

³⁹ Ibid. p.35.

⁴⁰ Charles Henri Ford, *Emblems of Arachne* (New York: Catchword Papers, 1986), p27.

Crows in the fog, dogs
In the dew, honey in the house
And so are you.⁴¹

Upon first inspection, the sense of domestic tranquility established in the earlier *Secret Haiku* appears to persist in Ford's *Emblems of Arachne*:

A place in which to
Talk to oneself, while a child's
Kite flies in the rain.⁴²

The hearth of the home seemingly provides a place for peaceful reflection in the final haiku of Ford's *Emblems of Arachne*. However, the more closely we look at these late haiku, the more clearly we can appreciate that something has disturbed Ford's domestic idyll:

Invisible envelopes,
A standstill afternoon.
A rain of *merde*.⁴³

Ford's frustrated outburst implies that all is not well in the domestic setting of *Emblems of Arachne*. The following haiku offers a clue as to why:

The weather is mild
And noble. Mummies of
Reminiscence parade.⁴⁴

The 'Mummies of / Reminiscence' that 'parade' through Ford's home are responsible for disturbing the domestic peace. These mummified specters of reminiscence carry with them a residual corpse language that threatens Ford's domestic tranquility in his late haiku. It is telling that the figure of the mummified corpse threatens Ford's domestic bliss in *Emblems of Arachne*. Julia Kristeva famously posits that the human corpse is the personification of abjection: 'It is something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not project oneself as from an object. Imaginary uncanniness and real

⁴¹ Ford, *Emblems of Arachne*, p.23.

⁴² Ibid. p.27.

⁴³ Ibid. p.15.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p.16.

threat, it beckons to us and ends up engulfing us'⁴⁵. The point to be made here is that abjection goes hand-in-hand with what Kristeva describes as a 'sudden emergence of uncanniness, which, familiar as it might have been in opaque and forgotten life, now harries me as radically separate, loathsome'.⁴⁶

The uncanny sensation produced upon viewing the parade of mummified corpses has an added resonance as it occurs in the domestic realm so privileged by Ford. Recalling Sigmund Freud, we might say that in such moments the homely (*das Heimliche*) threatens to become unhomely (*das Unheimliche*) in the deceptively tranquil *Emblems of Arachne*. Freud argues that the 'uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression'.⁴⁷ Freud's suggestion that the uncanny stems from a repression of that 'which is familiar and old-established in the mind' helps us to better understand Ford's late haiku. So does Jacques Lacan's unique spin on the anxiety produced by the Freudian uncanny: 'Anxiety is when there appears in this frame something which is already there much closer to home'.⁴⁸ According to Lacan, the repressed returns in the form of a *house-guest*. 'This guest in the ordinary sense, is not the *heimlich*, it is not the person who lives in the house, it is someone hostile who has been softened, pacified, accepted'.⁴⁹ I want to argue that the repressed returns in the spectral form of an unwanted – and *familiar* – poetic houseguest who is knocking at the door of Ford's *Emblems of Arachne*:

Who knocks? Can you make
Straw sandals with the feathers
Of a bird? Who calls?⁵⁰

Ford depicts a 'Juggernaut chanting, / Squatting under a tree'⁵¹ outside his home. It is the ghost of Ezra Pound who is knocking at Ford's front door. And it is the ghost of Pound who threatens to dismantle the peaceful house that Ford has painstakingly 'assembled'.

⁴⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984), p.4.

⁴⁶ Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, p.2.

⁴⁷ Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', *The Penguin Freud Library Volume 14: Art and Literature* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), pp.363-64.

⁴⁸ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book X: Anxiety 1962-1963* (London: Karnac Books, 2002), Seminar 6: Wednesday 19 December 1962, p.6.

⁴⁹ Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book X*, Seminar 6, p.6.

⁵⁰ Ford, *Emblems of Arachne*, p.13.

References to the reanimated Pound begin to re-emerge in Ford's *Emblems of Arachne*. Even the title can be said to refer back to Pound: 'Arachne, che mi porta fortuna, go spin on that tent rope' (LXXVI: 475). Whilst the spider Arachne brought no good luck to Pound during his Pisan imprisonment, does she Ford? According to myth, Arachne was the girl who, having challenged Athena, was turned into a spider and condemned to a lifetime of weaving. Pound gradually came to the conclusion that, much like Arachne, he was to leave behind 'a tangle of works unfinished' (CXVI: 809). Pound was left 'to think that what has been shall be, / flowing, ever unstill' (CXIII: 801). 'Unstill, ever turning' (CXIII: 804), Ford alludes to these lines in *Emblems of Arachne*:

In the maze of the
Mirror of the Unknown, turning
Keeps us turning.⁵²

Ford is simultaneously drawing attention to a particular process of negative transmutation that occurs in the opening canto of *Drafts & Fragments*. Ford recognizes that the 'generative motion' displayed in the opening passages of canto CX soon give way to more destructive, tempestuous forms of natural movement. The previously cited winds of 'darkness' (CX: 795) prove particularly disorientating. These winds spin Pound around before casting him into the aforementioned 'hall of mirrors'. The 'hall of mirrors' is an important motif in *Drafts & Fragments*. By the end of Pound's epic poem, almost every phrase is an allusion or a reference to a previous moment in the 'maze' of the *Cantos*. References are forever being reflected and refracted across the whole spectrum of the *Cantos*, forcing both author and reader to refer (or 'turn') back in an increasingly fraught attempt to establish sense, stability, and 'more harmony' (CXIII: 802). However, there is no mental peace to be found in the 'hall of mirrors' of the perpetually refracting *Cantos*. As Pound admits towards the end of the *Drafts & Fragments*: 'I cannot make it flow thru' (CXVI: 811). That is, he cannot bring order to the chaos of his 'tangle of works unfinished', nor can he bring 'uncontending' (CXIV: 807) peace to his unsettled mind.

Ford realizes that he faces a similar problem in his late haiku. Pound's allusive and spectral re-emergence in *Emblems of Arachne* precludes the possibility of Ford achieving

⁵¹ Ibid. p.22.

⁵² Ibid. p.16.

any authorial peace. This anxiety is registered at a textual level in *Emblems of Arachne*. Where the imagery in the preceding volume of *Om Krishna* was relatively playful and tranquil, a significant number of the haiku in *Emblems of Arachne* display a tendency towards the traumatic. Ford's haiku registers the shock of 'Solitary seizures, Half elliptic'⁵³ and are punctuated by moments of unnamed trauma:

Whole family weeping
Only the second son, about
Nine, seems unmoved.⁵⁴

A peculiar kind of oppressive 'Dampness in the air'⁵⁵ begins to descend in Ford's late haiku. The anxiety-inducing unhomeliness that underwrites *Emblems of Arachne* forces us to reassess the closing image of Ford's final, domesticated haiku. Has our elderly poet found a secure, peaceful 'place in which to / Talk to oneself, while a child's / Kite flies in the rain'? It is impossible to say either way. Thus the final haiku of *Emblems of Arachne* appears to ensure that Ford's long and varied poetic career ends shrouded in a dampening mist of ambiguous uncertainty.

Ford's Belated Return to *Blues* and the Problematic Poundian Imperative

Or does it? In 1989, three years after *Emblems of Arachne*, a tenth edition of Ford's modernist little magazine *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms* was published in New York. *Blues 10* was issued as a special edition of Michael Andre's avant-garde little magazine: *Unmuzzled OX* (figure 4). Some sixty years had elapsed between the publication of the first and tenth *Blues*. Ford's return to *Blues* was somewhat belated. As early as 1931, it is clear that Ford wanted to publish a tenth *Blues*. Decrying the difficult conditions in Depression-era America as unsuitable for *Blues*, Ford wrote to Gertrude Stein on 22 January 1931: 'nothing but america could make desperate about literature ever so at least number 10 will

⁵³ Ibid. p.13.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p.25.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p.23.

come out in paris and il let you know as soon as'.⁵⁶ Whilst this Parisian issue of the magazine never materialized, Ford's *Blues* impulse persisted over the decades.

Correspondence with New Directions publisher James Laughlin confirms the continued existence of this underlying impulse, albeit in a slightly different guise. In a letter dated 14 October 1951, Ford wrote excitedly to Laughlin that '[t]he inspiration has come to me to edit a quarterly of new poetry and call it BLUES 52'.⁵⁷ Turning to the 1960s, we can see that Ford's *Blues* impulse saw little sign of abating. In a letter of 18 March 1964, Paul Bowles confirms as much: 'Blues Ten sounds good, but I feel sure that by now it's a project of the past, since you do change your mind with the wind, don't you?'⁵⁸ But Ford did not change his mind. And as Andre tells it, Ford's desire to return to *Blues* was just as strong in the 1980s:

At tea at the Dakota Charles told me about *Blues* and said "I want you to publish it as an issue of *Unmuzzled OX*." He may just have said "I want you to publish it" but I can still hear those six words. Charles' voice was rising as he delivered them. It was the assertion at the end of the narrative. It was a very characteristic change in his speaking voice.⁵⁹

Andre's recollection of the 'assertion at the end' of Ford's 'narrative' is especially pertinent when considered in relation to the preceding section of this chapter. Note Ford's assertive tone. As Andre suggests, Ford was extremely keen to grasp the opportunity to push his magazine back into the literary limelight after an extended absence of sixty years.⁶⁰ *Blues 10* represented a last chance of sorts for the marginalized, 'hermitized'⁶¹ Ford to renew his

⁵⁶ Charles Henri Ford to Gertrude Stein, 22 January 1931. Harry Ransom Center (HRC). The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 7, Folder 12.

⁵⁷ Charles Henri Ford to James Laughlin, 14 October 1951. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 7, Folder 6.

⁵⁸ Paul Bowles to Charles Henri Ford, 18 March 1964. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 12, Folder 6.

⁵⁹ Michael Andre, e-mail to the author: 5 February 2011.

⁶⁰ An editorial announcement in *Unmuzzled OX 22* (Winter 1981) makes passing reference to the fact that Ford had already collected a significant number of manuscripts for a possible tenth *Blues* as early as 1981.

⁶¹ Late in life, Ford was prone to self-depreciation, referring to himself as the 'Hermit of the Dakota' (his New York home of many years). Valery Oïșteanu, 'Charles Henri Ford (1908-2002)', *NY Arts*: December 2002 (Online Edition): http://www.nyartsmagazine.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1223:charles-henri-ford-1908-2002-by-valery-oisteanu&catid=39:december-2002&Itemid=682. Last accessed: 20 September 2010.

dialogue with Ezra Pound *and* to make his presence felt once more in contemporary literary circles (whilst also reminding people of his previous achievements).⁶²

At the same time, Ford's belated return to *Blues* was always going to bring with it the promise of a potentially problematic sort of personal closure (a type of closure that was noticeably absent in his final haiku). We can posit that in choosing to revisit *Blues* at such a late stage in life, Ford experienced something akin to the sensation outlined in Walter Benjamin's reconceptualization of *déjà-vu*:

Shouldn't we rather speak of events which affect us like an echo—one awakened by a sound that seems to have issued from somewhere in the darkness of past life? ... It is a word, a rustling or knocking, that is endowed with the power to call us unexpectedly into the cool sepulchre of the past, from whose vault the present seems to resound only as an echo.⁶³

Following Benjamin, we might reason that the name *Blues* is endowed with the power to draw Ford – and his readers – into the echoing 'vault' of his life's 'narrative' (Andre). That is to say, *Blues 10* has the power to transport us back to the originary point of Ford's literary career: the Mississippi-based *Blues* of 1929. It is clear that *Blues* exerted an almost totemic pull over Ford throughout his adult literary life. If we look closely enough at Ford's late poetry, we can better appreciate that *Blues* is always lurking in the background. We can see this in a self-referential passage in the first volume of *Om Krishna*:

This Is About Me—to Gide.
Psst! Morrison's pea-shooter is history running
young. He can't lose. Baby-faced empti-
ness rearin' to go, hooray for inhibitions.
God-given form is far from bashful. Properly
conducted, the impatient hot dog begat
blue meanies.

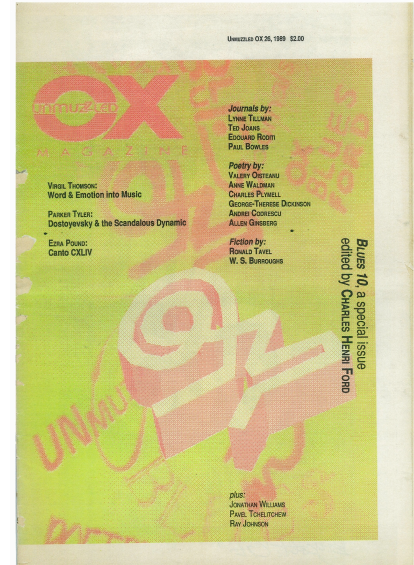
⁶² But things did not go quite according to plan. Michael Andre describes how Ford's peculiar mix of pride, stubbornness, and willfulness ensured that *Blues 10* did not attract the maximum amount of possible publicity: 'We were planning a party for *Blues*. The purpose of a publishing party is to gain attention for the publication. I wanted to invite Yoko [Ono: Ford's neighbor in the Dakota]. No, Charles said, no; and he was adamant. The debate went on for weeks. In the end we didn't and *Blues* received no attention. I wondered if Charles objected to a party at which he was not the center of attention, or perhaps Charles and Yoko did not get along, or maybe I was out to lunch'. Andre, e-mail to the author, 29 January 2011.

⁶³ Walter Benjamin, *Berlin Childhood Around 1900* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 2006), p.129.

Oh la la. He calls it joie de vivre.⁶⁴

From the outset, Ford makes it perfectly clear that this passage is all about him. The colloquial tone ('Baby faced empti-/ness rearin' to go) and Camp language ('Oh la la') of this extract is characteristic of Ford's mature style. But it is the reference to the 'impatient hot dog' (Ford himself) that begets 'blue meanies' that most clearly signals that he is referring to the formative venture of his 'Baby-faced' adolescence: *Blues*.

Ford was barely out of his teens and 'rearin' to go' when he first published *Blues* in 1929. *Blues* was the formative venture of what was, effectively, Ford's literary childhood. Reading the original *Blues*, we often get the sense that the naïve and 'far from bashful' Ford was, at times, running alone on editorial nerve and infectious, childish enthusiasm. As we will later see, the self-conscious, adolescent naivety of the original *Blues* proves to be a great and lasting critical merit of Ford's magazine. Benjamin's understanding of childhood⁶⁵ is pertinent here: 'Task of childhood: to bring the new world into symbolic space. The child, in fact, can do what the grownup absolutely cannot: recognize the new once again'⁶⁶. Benjamin's account of childhood neatly encapsulates what the adolescent Ford strove to achieve with his *Blues*. The original *Blues* sought to renovate a 'grownup' modernism that some critics had already labelled as obsolete as early as 1929. In effect, the 'task' that Ford set himself in *Blues* was to 'recognize', renovate, and reinvigorate the modernist 'new once again'.



(Figure 4)

It remains to be seen whether or not Ford's formative attempt at modernistic renovation was successful. What is clear is that the appearance of a tenth *Blues* in 1989 at the supposed end of Ford's literary 'narrative' should not be considered in isolation. Rather, it must be understood in terms of *culmination*. More specifically, the belated appearance of *Blues 10* needs to be understood as the culmination of another sort of

⁶⁴ Ford, *Om Krishna I*, p.25.

⁶⁵ The author thanks Gerard Malanga for suggesting the comparison between Ford and Benjamin.

⁶⁶ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2002), p.390.

Bloomian literary apprenticeship. Following Bloom, we might say that the 'wheel' of Ford's apprenticeship has come 'full circle' in 1989. As well as offering Ford the final opportunity to assert his presence on the contemporary cultural scene, *Blues 10* provided him with a chance to secure his place in 'A poetry of post-poetry to be published /posthumously'.⁶⁷

In order to secure his (posthumous) poetic legacy, Ford returns to one site of his formative apprenticeship (*Blues*) in order to cast out the anxiety-inducing, spectral remnants of another (Pound). Let me explain what I mean by this. As will become clear in our later discussion of the original *Blues*, the form of the little magazine provides a symbolic housing space for literary modernism. What is more, contemporary critics like Suzanne W. Churchill (whose theorizations are discussed in a later chapter) have recently outlined the decidedly *domestic* aspect of these symbolic enclaves. We have already seen how conceptions of domestic space filter through into Ford's haiku in the 1980s. Now we can see how the same can also be said of Ford's editorial return to *Blues* in 1989. The original *Blues* was one of the foundational sites of Ford's literary apprenticeship. Metaphorically speaking, we might say the 1929 *Blues* was Ford's first literary home. The original *Blues* was the idealized 'childhood' home – the symbolic domestic enclave – of Ford's pubescent apprenticeship. Some sixty years later, Ford returns to the symbolic site of his modernist apprenticeship to take-stock and reflect. *Blues 10* offers Ford a final opportunity to find a domesticated 'place in which to / Talk to oneself' in quiet, peaceful reflection.

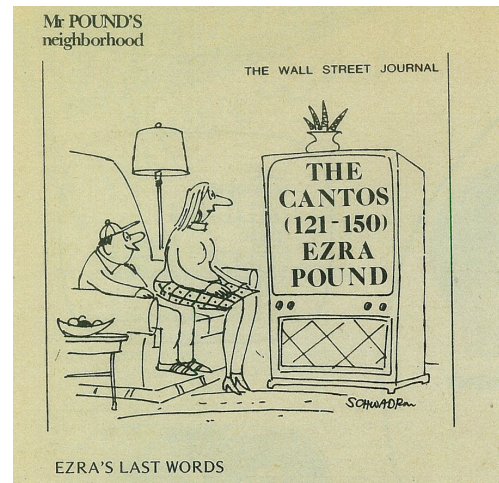
However, it seems that even here Ford cannot shake the specter of Pound. The belated appearance of *Blues 10* brings with it a large helping of irony. The reason behind this has much to do with the immediate context in which *Blues 10* emerged. Recall that *Blues 10* was issued as a special edition of Andre's *Unmuzzled OX*. Issues 23-26 of Andre's *Unmuzzled OX* were alternately known as 'The Cantos (121-150) of Ezra Pound'. Andre thought of these issues as 'tabloid extensions of Pound's cantos'.⁶⁸ The *Unmuzzled OX Blues* was the fourth part of Andre's proposed *continuation* of the *Cantos*. Much as it did in Ford's late haiku, the ghost of Pound thus lingers in the *Unmuzzled OX Blues*. Indeed,

⁶⁷ Ford, *Om Krishna II: from the Sickroom of the Walking Eagles*, unpaginated.

⁶⁸ See *Unmuzzled OX: 26 / Blues: 10* (1989). Hereafter abbreviated (B: 10) and cited parenthetically by page number.

Andre draws attention to this fact in an editorial interjection entitled 'Ezra's Last Words' in Ford's tenth *Blues* (figure 5). In that piece, Andre jokingly notes that 'Pound phoned again on Tuesday and I said, "Ez, you're dead"' (B: 10, 78).

All jokes aside, the spectral presence of Pound is felt in other, more persuasive ways in the *Unmuzzled OX Blues*. However, in order more clearly to demonstrate how Ford's tenth *Blues* is ostensibly indebted to Poundian modernist imperatives, we must first differentiate it from the other issues of the *Unmuzzled OX Cantos*. Broadly speaking, the three issues of Andre's *Unmuzzled OX Cantos* (23-25) that immediately precede Ford's tenth *Blues* sought to critically evaluate the lasting legacy of Pound. For example, *Unmuzzled OX 25* (also known as 'Ezra Pound's Interview') closes with an interview of the poet Galway Kinnell. In this interview, Sarah Barnett presses Kinnell on the topic of Pound's influence and legacy. Kinnell's reply retreads familiar ground. Kinnell concedes that Pound has influenced him in the same way that he has everybody else, 'in the sense that he's opened up some of the limitations we would have taken for granted otherwise in poetry, as far as jumping from thing to thing to thing, as far as intermingling quotations with our own work'.⁶⁹ At the same time, Kinnell distances himself from Pound's personality and politics: 'But I don't think I've been greatly affected in any personal and deep way by Pound. I've really always been put off by his antisemitism, his fascism, any by his alienated ego. And so these three things have just created a wall'.⁷⁰



(Figure 5)

Despite offering little in the way of significant critical insight, it is important to note that Kinnell's *Unmuzzled OX* interview is part of a wider – and often more nuanced – appraisal of Pound that takes place in the various issues of Andre's magazine. This is especially true of the radically experimental contributions of the anarchist poets John Cage

⁶⁹ Sarah Barnett, 'Galway Kinnell and Sarah Barnett Three Weeks After Chernobyl', *Unmuzzled OX*: 25 (1988), p.120.

⁷⁰ Barnett, p.120.

and Jackson Mac Low in *Unmuzzled OX* 23. Tyrus Miller notes that Cage and Mac Low ‘were engaged enough with the work of Pound to subject the *Cantos* to an elegiac “writing-through,” a textual reprocessing of Pound that may be in equal measure and mournful of their oversized modernist predecessor’.⁷¹ Cage and Mac Low quite literally weave the name of Ezra Pound through their poems, as a paleonymic *ghost* who may be forgiven and perhaps even admired’.⁷² In doing so, ‘they explore the boundary spaces of the “Pound tradition”—at the edges where the very idea of generic tradition, the foundation-stone of Pound’s epic poetics and politics, begins to disappear’.⁷³ In short, Cage and Mac Low shatter ‘Pound’s work to bits, indeed divesting it of all that is essentially Poundian’, in order to challenge ‘the systematic structure of epic intertextuality in the *Cantos* and Pound’s political conception of the poet that was its correlate’.⁷⁴

We can look to Mac Low’s contribution (‘CXXIV’) to *Unmuzzled OX* to see how this technique of ‘writing-through’ operates:

he old En’s nZe
piRe r’s fAll;
Place gOuty-
footed.

StUbborn gaiNst ilteD Ers tZ,
e eRa,
to-
dAy Past,
“COntemporary.”⁷⁵

As we can see, Mac Low’s process of ‘writing-through’ provides a suitably fragmentary commentary on the ‘shattered’ figure of Pound. To be sure, Mac Low’s unusual typography ostensibly mimics the idiosyncratic approach favored by Pound. But here any potential comparison comes apart. Instead, Mac Low proffers a thinly veiled critique of Pound’s ‘StUbborn’ personality and individual shortcomings. Mac Low seems to be arguing that a famously poor, ‘gOuty-/footed’ decision-making process has contributed to ‘old’ Ez’s ‘fAll’

⁷¹ Tyrus Miller, *Singular Examples: Artistic Politics and the Neo-Avant-Garde* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2009), p.66.

⁷² Miller, *Singular Examples*, p.70. Emphasis added.

⁷³ Ibid. p.70.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Jackson Mac Low ‘CXXIV’, *Unmuzzled OX*: 23 (1988), p.14.

from poetic grace in 'COntemporary' literary circles. In this reading, in an ironic twist on his own dictum about great literature, Pound appears to be 'Past' news.⁷⁶ At the same time, Mac Low's allusion to the so-called Pound 'era' hints at the influence Pound exerts over those aforementioned 'Contemporary' literary circles of 'to-/Day'. Such considered ambivalence thus prevents Mac Low's poem from slipping into the sort of forthright, unreflective didacticism and poetic polemic that became Pound's trademark.

Turning to *Blues 10*, one is struck first by the marked difference between Ford's issue of *Unmuzzled OX* and the three that precede it. For instance, there is nothing comparable to Mac Low's ambivalent textual 'reprocessing' of Pound in the *Unmuzzled OX Blues*. Ford's edition of *Unmuzzled OX* denotes a radical departure from the 'reprocessing' procedures that were to be found in the other volumes of the *Cantos* 121-150. Indeed, on first inspection, it seems as if Ford has simply dispensed with the investigation of Pound's legacy that so preoccupied the three preceding issues. In fact, we might say that Ford is operating with an entirely different editorial agenda. Ford's decision to dispense with any extended discussion – or critique – of Pound's poetic legacy can be chalked up to self-interest. Ford is less interested in debating Pound's legacy than he is with shoring up his own. Hence the inclusion of Ira Cohen's 'In Japan You Have The Right To Kill Someone Who Is Destroying Your Inner Space' in the *Unmuzzled OX Blues*:

The Aeroflot plane which Charles Henri Ford
was not allowed to board was hijacked today.
Instead of being hijacked he records his temperature
and takes a Tentex Forte (ayurvedic aphrodisiac
coated with silver). He knows the party has peaked
& considers removing the excessive sexual references.
Charles Henri Ford is definitely a *seminal* poet, he
approves the crab remoulade & savors a glass of
Courvoisier. After all, his blood has been sent
by diplomatic pouch to California, albeit under a
fictitious Nepali name. He is a living corsair of
modern poetry. Can't you hear the feathered feet
stamping in the abandoned subway of history? (B: 10, 71)

⁷⁶ Pound's belief was that great literature 'is news that STAYS news'. Ezra Pound, *ABC of Reading* (New York: New Directions, 1987), p.29.

Cohen's tribute is effusive and effacing in equal measure. Cohen's acknowledges Ford's outsider status in contemporary literary circles when he describes him as 'a living corsair of / modern poetry'. Cohen's poem seeks to redress such a critical imbalance by raising our 'seminal' subject (a wry reference to Edward B. Germain's account of Ford) to the status of an important poetic diplomat, but only after having poked fun at Charles Henri's personal extravagances and pretensions. Cohen's poem also makes passing reference to Ford's internationalism. When read alongside the playful reference to samples of Ford's poetic DNA ('blood') being mailed in a 'diplomatic pouch' from Nepal to California, Cohen's poem hints at the transnational, alternative networks of communication and poetic exchange which Ford sought to establish throughout his career (see chapter two).

Cohen also depicts Ford as having realized that 'the party has peaked'. The suggestion here is that the 'feather-footed' Ford has realized that his own 'historical' moment has passed. If so, then it also helps explain the appeal of a guest editorial appearance in Andre's *Unmuzzled OX*. Ford saw in the *Unmuzzled OX Blues* an opportunity to document aspects of his historical moment before it faded forever from view. Ford envisaged the *Unmuzzled OX Blues* as a poetic vessel, a repository in which to showcase aspects of his poetic and aesthetic legacy. This explains why Ford selected particular writers and artists for inclusion in *Blues 10*. The writers selected for inclusion in *Blues 10* were chosen mainly because of the way that their contributions gesture towards Ford's personal investment in a variety of diverse literary and cultural movements scattered across the decades of the 20th century.

We can divide the contributions to the *Unmuzzled OX Blues* into three main categories. Firstly, we have the writers whose work refers back to the original *Blues*: Paul Bowles ('P.B. in 1929'), Edouard Roditi ('Childhood Memory'), and Parker Tyler ('Dostoevsky and the Scandalous Dynamic'). All three were prominent contributors to the 1929 *Blues*. This is another instance of Ford's literary apprenticeship coming full-circle. However, Ford's decision to include these writers (and 'child-hood' friends) in the 1989 *Blues* should not be attributed to a simple case of nostalgia. Rather, Ford is responding to Bowles:

Nineteen Twenty Nine was a real year, I suppose, but now it has little substance for me. I mean that I remember what happened to me, but I have no clear idea of the sort of world where it happened (B: 10, 56).

As we know, 1929 had a great personal significance for Ford: it was the year when his poetic apprenticeship began in earnest. The 1989 *Blues* was designed to combat the sort of historical forgetfulness mentioned by Bowles. Ford envisaged the *Unmuzzled OX Blues* as a repository where individual impressions, recollections, and past personal associations – especially those pertaining to him – could be documented before they faded into the ether.

Secondly, we have those contributions that attest to Ford's involvement in a wide range of avant-garde movements during the 20th century. Included in this category are artists like Pavel Tchelitchew (whose sketches of Gertrude Stein simultaneously allude to Ford's involvement with Cubism and Neo-Romanticism), the Pop Artist Ray Johnson, and first- and second-generation Beat writers like Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, Harold Norse, and Anne Waldman. Finally, we have those writers whose work was directly influenced by Ford. For instance, the sexually explicit content of prose pieces like Lynne Tillman's 'Diary of a Masochist' and poems such as Sky Garner's non-normative 'Fin de Siècle' bear the imprint of Ford's foundational text of queer modernism: *The Young and Evil* (1933). In a similar manner, the contributions of younger American Surrealist poets like Andrei Codrescu, Ted Joans, and Valery Oïșteanu also feature prominently in the *Unmuzzled OX Blues*.

Thus the elderly Ford marshals a lifetime's worth of literary contacts and aesthetic associations for the sake of posterity in the *Unmuzzled OX Blues*. The situation seems to be comparable to the scene Oïșteanu describes in his 'Dream':

Body-snatchers and necrophiliacs
Dancing on the edge of my crypt
Go away my nightmare! pass!
I am trying to sleep
Focusing on posterity (B: 10, 70)

To be sure, Ford is firmly focused on posterity in the *Unmuzzled OX Blues*. At the same time, however, Ford is equally keen belatedly to assert his own poetic authority. Ford tries to assert his poetic authority by effectively effacing any trace of Pound from the *Unmuzzled OX*. Lest we forget, this particular volume of *Unmuzzled OX* was originally conceived as a continuation of the *Cantos*. However, with the exception of a heavily truncated version of Pound's 'Program 1929' (originally published in the *Blues* of March 1929) and a few

scattered references to a dead 'Ez', there is scarcely a mention of the poetic master of Ford's apprenticeship to be found in the *Unmuzzled OX Blues*. In this respect, it looks like Ford has wholeheartedly embraced the opportunity finally to shake off the anxiety-inducing ghost of his poetic and editorial apprenticeship.

Or so it seems. The great irony of Ford's attempted effacement is that it cannot prevent his *Unmuzzled OX Blues* from fulfilling a basic Poundian imperative. Pound famously once wrote of his desire to construct a 'portable substitute for the British Museum'.⁷⁷ Replete with 'luminous' historical details and filled with cultural artifacts, the *Cantos* came to symbolize Pound's attempt to do this. However, given that Pound himself doubted the viability of ever producing such a comprehensive portable archive, it is perhaps unsurprising that the project seemed destined to fail. For fail it did: with disastrous personal consequences for Pound. Late in life, beaten down by the forces of history and irrevocably damaged by individual political and economic folly, Pound tried to console himself with the fact that

First came the seen, then thus the palable
Elysium, though it were in the halls of hell,
What thou lovest well is thy true heritage
What thou love'st well shall not be reft from thee (LXXXI: 535)

The story of Pound's imprisonment at the Pisan D.T.C. after the fall of Mussolini's Fascist government has often been told; there is no need to retell it here. Rather, I cite these famous lines as they form part of a dramatic personal and poetic re-calibration that begins in the *Pisan Cantos* (1948) and which Pound revisits in the aforementioned *Drafts & Fragments*. As we can see in these two volumes, Pound no longer thinks of the *Cantos* as a portable archive for the treasures of the world. Instead, the *Cantos* become a symbolic poetic space where Pound can cling rather desperately to that which he holds dear. We have already established that the simultaneously physical and metaphorical space that Pound initially comes to rest upon in the *Drafts & Fragments* is rendered in explicitly domestic terms: the aforementioned 'quiet house' (CX: 791) of the sparsely populated island situated at the northern end of the Venetian Lagoon. However, it is equally important to note that the faded grandeur of the Byzantine basilica assumes a more

⁷⁷ Pound, *Literary Essays*, p.16.

humble form later in the *Drafts & Fragments*. The basilica of Torcello is replaced by a 'Town house in Hartford' (CXI: 796). However, this space is soon rejected. So too are numerous others:

No more the pseudo-gothic sprawled house
out over the bridge there
(Washington Bridge, N.Y.C.)
but everything boxed for economy (CXIII: 802)

Pound wants to return to a far more humble, domestic, and private space: 'And to this garden, Marcella, ever seeking by petal, by leaf-vein / out of dark, and toward half-light' (CXIII: 802). The humble, domestic setting into which the elderly Pound hopes finally to settle is a far cry from the grand surroundings that he evoked when equating the *Cantos* with the British Museum. The drift towards the domestic in the late *Cantos* seems to provide Pound with some semblance of personal peace. However, we also know that the sense of domestic tranquility does not last long in the *Drafts & Fragments*. Past failures return to haunt Pound and the initially peaceful Byzantine basilica comes to represent a more ominous, deathly 'tomb, an end, / Galla's rest, and thy quiet house at Torcello' (CX: 794). What was once figured as a portable compendium of cultural achievement has finally become a binding poetic mausoleum: the 'quiet house' in which Pound hoped to store what he 'lovest well' has turned in a tomb.

Whilst Pound and Ford's biographies are, of course, completely different, the fact remains that the respective forms of their late poetic projects end up being strikingly similar. That is, whilst Pound and Ford have taken very different routes to get there, they eventually arrive at the same destination as they move into old age. By bringing together what he 'lovest well' in the 'quiet house' of *Unmuzzled OX Blues*, Ford's final editorial venture does begin unintentionally to mirror, albeit on a much smaller scale, the sort of symbolic refuge favored by Pound in his late, domesticated *Cantos*. What we have here is an example of a typically Fordian sort of conceptual internalization. Somewhat ironically, the tenth *Blues* registers the Poundian imperative towards preservation on a basic conceptual level.

Thus Ford's concerted editorial effort to expunge virtually all traces of Pound from the *Unmuzzled OX Blues* seems to have been in vain. Much as in the late haiku, the ghost of

Pound still seems to haunt Ford's house in 1989. Consequently, it seems feasible to posit that the *Unmuzzled OX Blues* is far closer in *spirit* to Pound's late *Cantos* than Ford seems either able or willing to recognize. Similarly, we might also reason that Ford's focus on posterity subsequently transforms his tenth *Blues* into a personal 'crypt' (Oişteanu): something reminiscent of Pound's 'tomb' in the suitably spectral, concluding *Drafts & Fragments*. However, the very form of the *Unmuzzled OX Blues* prevents Ford's final editorial project from slipping into the sort of everlasting mausoleum evoked by Pound in what proved to be the concluding, binding section of the *Cantos*.⁷⁸

Shari and Bernard Benstock argue that little magazines are, '[b]y definition, ephemeral forms, dependent on the conditions of history'.⁷⁹ The 'ephemeral' and historically contingent form of the *Unmuzzled OX Blues* ensures that Ford's 'final' major literary venture resists binding finality (whilst simultaneously harking back to the roots of Ford's originary modernist apprenticeship). That is to say, whilst Ford's tenth *Blues* is undoubtedly preservative, it also strives to be proactive and *projective*. In Ford's words, he always strove to be 'up to the minute'.⁸⁰ Although such a desire to be at all times 'up to the minute' is certainly indicative of what a critic like David Simpson would describe as 'defensive situatedness',⁸¹ it is also illustrative of Ford's absolute commitment to remaining open to the possibility of building fresh aesthetic networks in which to house both old and new friendships and poetic associations.

We get a hint of such a commitment in the *Unmuzzled OX Blues*. Even though a number of the younger writers seem to have been selected because of the way their work

⁷⁸ The eventual incorporation of the discrete sections of Pound's *Cantos* into a single volume can be read as similar sort of binding. Such an approach has its benefits. Michael Hinds and Stephen Matterson note that 'the value of the book-context is in its creation of a desire to see the fragments find an ultimate shape, whatever the inadequacies of the book in which they are immediately contained'. Michael Hinds and Stephen Matterson, 'Introduction: A Speaking Whole', Michael Hinds and Stephen Matterson (ed.), *Rebound: The American Poetry Book* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), p.7. In other words, a bound book provides a project with a degree of permanence and 'ultimate shape' that is otherwise difficult to achieve. But bookbinding also brings with it connotations suggestive of enduring fixity, immovability and non-negotiable closure.

⁷⁹ Shari Benstock and Bernard Benstock, 'The Role of Little Magazines in the Emergence of Modernism', *The Library Chronicle of the University of Texas at Austin* (20:4, 1991), p.87.

⁸⁰ Both Gerard Malanga and Lynne Tillman have commented on Ford's insistence upon remaining 'up to the minute' at all times.

⁸¹ 'To announce one's situatedness appears to preempt the accusation that one is not being adequately self aware, and at the same time to provide a limited authority to speak from a designated position'. David Simpson, *Situatedness, or, Why We Keep Saying Where We're Coming From* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002), p.195.

relates in some way to Ford, it is also clear that they have been chosen with one eye on the possible construction of public, international networks of potentially endless, projective literary association that – as we will see in the next chapter – were Ford's stock in trade throughout his literary career. Ford's tenth *Blues* is wholly 'dependent on the conditions of history' (Benstock): it offers a snapshot of a diverse grouping of a few people moving through a rather brief moment in time. In this regard, the contingent and ephemeral little magazine format of Ford's 1989 *Blues* resembles something akin to a mobile home: a projective, temporary aesthetic archive of no fixed abode.⁸² In short, whilst the elderly Ford does not totally succeed in freeing himself from the ghost of his formative literary apprenticeship in his late poetic and editorial practice, his belated return to the favored modernist form of his youth prevents him from getting, as Pound once famously said: 'stuck'.⁸³

⁸² During his philosophical investigation of the archive, Derrida reminds us that the Latin *archivum* derives from the Greek *arkheoin*: the house, address, or residence of a commanding magistrate. Derrida argues that every archive 'is at once institutive and conservative. Revolutionary and traditional'. Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever – A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1998), p.7. I think this an appropriate way to think about Ford's *Unmuzzled OX Blues*, especially when read alongside Derrida's later discussion of the inherently projective character of the archive: 'It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and a responsibility for tomorrow. The archive: if we want to know that will have meant, we will only know in times to come. Perhaps'. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, p.36.

⁸³ Pound's exact words to Donald Hall: 'Okay. I am stuck. The question is, am I dead, as Messrs. A. B. C. might wish?' Donald Hall, *Reminiscences and Opinions* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), p.240.

**Chapter Two: Themes of Circularity in the Poetry and Postal Practice of Charles
Henri Ford:**

The faded magnificence of emerald ponds
Pre-figures the death-trap of a counterclockwise game
The Legend of Myself, theme of circularity,
Like a strangler without a victim, whose rhythmic signature
Discarded and discovered on ladders and scaffoldings
Denies that immortality is ever interrupted¹

This chapter considers Charles Henri Ford's career-spanning commitment to what we can describe as a distinctively *circular* poetic practice. Ford's brand of circular poetics revolves around notions of sociability and epistolary exchange. More specifically, Ford's poetic practice seeks to establish ever-widening concentric, increasingly expansive networks of alternative literary circulation, participation, and collaboration. This chapter seeks to consider this largely overlooked aspect of Ford's poetic and editorial practice.

This chapter begins by tracing the impetus of Ford's circular poetics back to *Blues*. Having considered the significance of *Blues* (and a number of related post-*Blues* poems) this chapter goes on to describe how Ford's collaborative circular poetic approach flourished initially at the beginning of the 1940s. In the process, the discussion reveals Ford's circular poetics to be one that anticipates the emergence of certain trends in subsequent postmodern aesthetics: namely underground movements like 'Mail Art' (as practiced by Ray Johnson). Having done so, this chapter concludes with a discussion of Ford's fondness for postcards during the 1970s. It closes with the suggestion that Ford's career-long predilection for the postcard can be read as the culmination of a process of poetic differentiation: a shift from intimate private exchange to ostentatious public display.²

¹ Charles Henri Ford, *7 Poems* (Kathmandu, Nepal: Bardo Matrix, 1974), unpaginated.

² Another way to think about this shift would be to take into account Ford's initial desire for exclusive literary patronage and his later preference for inclusive public exchange. The adolescent Ford wrote of his desire for patronage: 'To be recognized, to be discovered! So much could I discover if, by having a patron [sic], I could have leisure. Charles Henri Ford, *I Will Be What I Am* [undated], p.86. Charles Henri Ford Papers. HRC. Series 4, Box, 21, Folder 2. Ford's early desire for patronage aligns him with general trends in the 'institution' of modernism. Lawrence Rainey argues that '[l]iterary modernism constitutes a strange and perhaps unprecedented withdrawal from the public sphere of cultural production and debate, a retreat into the divided world of patronage, investment, and collecting'. Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1998), p.75. As we will

All of the above can be traced back to Ford's first modernist little magazine: *Blues*. It is only logical that we should trace Ford's shift from the private to public sphere back to *Blues*. Dickran Tashjian argues that

[b]esides art itself, the most significant form of communication for the avant-garde has been the little magazine, which provides a wealth of material lending insight to its editors, contributors, and readership. In their diversity the littles range between *a public and private voice*, often proclaiming the views of a particular faction through a series of manifestos and just as often propounding the idiosyncrasies of a single editor.³

Tashjian's account of modernist little magazines can be productively applied to Ford's *Blues*. Firstly, notice the emphasis that Tashjian places on the 'public and private' communicative aspects of little magazines. This is certainly true of *Blues*. As I aim to show, *Blues* should be best thought of a sort of symbolic 'communicating vessel': one that provided Ford (and his close associates) with an initial means to develop alternative models of poetic sociability.⁴ At the same time, consider Tashjian's assertion that little magazines often proclaim 'the views of a particular faction through a series of manifestos and just as often propounding the idiosyncrasies of a single editor' in relation to Ford. One of the factors that make Ford's 'idiosyncratic' *Blues* so interesting is the conspicuous absence of a codified manifesto that might be said to serve the interests of any single literary 'faction'. The reason behind this lack of literary manifesto in *Blues* has much to do with the seemingly omniscient Ezra Pound.

Ford, Pound, and the Frustration-inducing Exchange of Circular Letters and Opinions as regards High Modernism in (and beyond) *Blues*:

see in this chapter, Ford's early desire for institutional forms of patronage soon faded; and with it any sort of 'uneasiness' and 'withdrawal' from the 'public sphere of cultural production'.

³ Dickran Tashjian, *Skyscraper Primitives: Dada and the American Avant-Garde* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan UP, 1975), p.xii. Emphasis added.

⁴ Breton coined the term 'communicating vessel': 'a *capillary tissue* without which it would be useless to try to imagine any mental circulation'. André Breton, *Communicating Vessels* (Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1990), p.130. As we will see, the influence of Bretonian Surrealism came to play a significant role in Ford's poetic postal practice of the 1940s.

On 2 July 1927, the teenage poet Charles Henri Ford received a postcard from Ezra Pound. We know this because an evidently delighted Ford made a point of noting the arrival of Pound's postcard in his journal (*I Will Be What I Am*):

Yesterday an autographed postal card came from Ezra Pound (with a picture of the Palazzo Ducale on the back – at Venezia, of course). Pound. So very business-like, telling me. "As per yours 30th May 1 copy Exile 1 st issue received to your order." After my affusion. Ah, well. Even to see his signature is something.⁵

So began Ford's correspondence with the modernist idol of his youth: 'Don Ezra'.⁶ To say that Ford was impressionable is an understatement: 'Ezra Pound. What a man!'⁷ Having waited impatiently for the arrival of Pound's cherished signature, Ford wasted little time in composing a speedy reply:

Dear Mr. Pound:-

Your card reached me a few days ago and in accordance with same an enclosing a bill for No. 1 of the "Exile"... "Pound!" I said. "Could I ever dream of receiving a lettre [sic] from the most brilliant poet of the century?"...

Possibly you will be bored on seeing that I enclose these poems... That they will be ignored I know only too well...⁸

Sadly, there is no record of Pound's take on Ford's act of adolescent hero-worship. In all likelihood, it probably failed to even register. After all, this sort of exchange would have been all too familiar for such a battle-hardened modernist promoter like Pound. However, the point I want to make here is that it *did* matter – very much so – to Ford.

Having already experienced a number of disheartening poetic rejections, Ford leapt at the opportunity to twist the ear of a potentially sympathetic modernist elder.⁹ Whilst

⁵ Ford, *I Will Be What I Am*, p. 90.

⁶ Ibid. p.91.

⁷ Ibid. p.90

⁸ Ibid. p.87.

⁹ Ford's initial attempts to get his poetry published suffered significant setbacks, particularly at the hands of *Poetry*'s founding editor: Harriet Monroe. Pound's occasional ally – and occasional nemesis – simply could not understand Ford's poetry. Ford makes this clear in a journal entry of 10 May 1927: 'Received my poems (as usual) back from Poetry with a stabbing phrase from Harriet Monroe. She said (twist!) that my poems did not seem to be poetry – the worst criticism anyone could make of them'. Ford, *I Will Be What I Am*, p.81.

we do not know what Pound thought of Ford's adolescent poetry, we do know that our fledgling poet must have made some sort of favorable impression on the elder statesman of high modernism. Some eighteen months later, we find Pound mentioning Ford to his father: 'C.H. Ford is starting a local show, with [Herman] Spector, Bill W[illia]ms. and [Joseph] Vogel, and printing [Louis] Zuk[ofsky]. Let's see what they can do'.¹⁰ The 'local show' to which Pound referred was Ford's Mississippi-based modernist little magazine: *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. In the previous chapter, I sought to underscore the central role *Blues* played in Ford's late haiku and editorial ventures. In this chapter, I want to underline just how important a role *Blues* played throughout Ford's career. This is especially true when it comes to a discussion of Ford's circular poetics. But in order better to appreciate Ford's circular poetics, we need first to understand the events that preceded the publication of *Blues* in February 1929.

Fittingly, the pre-history of Ford's *Blues* began with the arrival of a letter on 22 February 1928: 'Hope entered my dull existence today in the form of a charming letter from Miss Kathleen Tankersley Young'.¹¹ Ford reprints Young's letter in his journal:

One of the scrapbooks from the First National Poetry Exhibition that is being held in New York is in my hands. Mr [Lew] Ney mentions your name as one who would be interested in seeing it... I think that it will be at the Carnegie Library for a while... I hope that you are an informal person. For it is an informal exhibit and I am the least formal of persons. I do not have any friends. I am interested in art, my poetry, people who write, think or can thrill equally over a bag of popcorn or a sunset.¹²

The library in question was the Carnegie Library of San Antonio, Texas. A poet of the Harlem Renaissance, the visiting Young brought with her a sense of glamour to Ford's dull existence in San Antonio (where he was enrolled at high-school): 'She is the only Bohemian, aesthete, that I've met here'.¹³ Disdainful of what they perceived as petty bourgeois provincialism, the two young poets quickly formed a close bond:

¹⁰ Ezra Pound to Homer Pound, 22 January 1929. Mary de Rachewiltz, A. David Moody, Joanna Moody (ed), *Ezra Pound to His Parents: Letters 1895-1929* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011), p.618.

¹¹ Ford, *I Will Be What I Am*, p.100.

¹² Ibid. p.100.

¹³ Ibid. p.102.

Saw K. again this afternoon at library and we talked for two hours or more... her nervous hands beating a tattoo on the table that tore my heart to shatters... How I sympathize with her, living here with no people with her tastes, no nothing.¹⁴

Ford's frustration in this journal entry is palpable; it stems from his sense of isolation in San Antonio. Ford's isolated frustrated feelings contributed to his desire to strike out and form new bonds and associations. Founding a little magazine appealed to Ford as it provided a means with which to combat the problems posed by his provincial isolation.

Ford had previously written of his desire to set up a little magazine: a desire he shared with Young.¹⁵ Inspired by Young and by his reading of William Stanley Braithwaite's *Anthology of Magazine Verse*, Ford set out to realize his ambition. Young enlisted the support of William Carlos Williams; Ford sought out Pound. Pound certainly saw potential in Ford's proposed project. We can see this in a letter Pound sent to Joseph Vogel (a future editorial board member of *Blues*) on 23 January 1929: 'Seems to me a chance [in *Blues*] for the best thing since *The Little Review* and the certainly the best thing done in America without European help'.¹⁶ Pound had plenty of advice as regards the running of a modernist little magazine like *Blues*. We can see this in letter of 1 February 1929 that Pound sent to Ford: 'As to magazine policy: Most "young" magazines play ostrich. They neither recognize the outer world nor do they keep an eye on contemporary affairs of strictly literary nature'.¹⁷

Pound suggested that Ford 'shd. *look at* all the other poetry reviews and attack idiocy when it appears in them. The simplest and briefest form of attack is a *sottisier*'.¹⁸ Pound wanted Ford to compile an aggressive list of written stupidities contained within contemporary periodicals:

It is no longer my place to point out the idiocies that appear in "Poetry" for example.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ On 10 February 1928, Ford acknowledged that '[l]aunching a poetry magazine would help immensely... I am sure I have not been timid about sending my poems to editors. And I don't intend to be although hundreds have come back I am sometimes glad it's not so easy'. Ford, *I Will Be What I Am*, p. 99. On 4 March 1928, Ford recounts that Young 'too, has, thought of starting a poetry magazine but don't guess we will'. Ford, *I Will Be What I Am*, p.102.

¹⁶ Ezra Pound, *Selected Letters, 1907-1941* (New York: New Directions: 1971), p.223.

¹⁷ Pound, *Selected Letters*, p.224.

¹⁸ Ibid. p.224.

The older boy shd. not stick pins into the younger. It is courageous of the young to stick pins into the pompous.
 Make your sottisier from Poetry and the main literary reviews, sunday supplements etc.
 These sottisiers are often the first parts of a live mag that people read.¹⁹

Notice the generational aspect of Pound's advice to Ford:

Every generation or group must write its own literary program. The way to do this is by circular letter to your ten chief allies. Find out the two or three points you agree on (if *any*) and issue them as a program. If you merely want to endorse something in my original Imagist manifesto, or the accompanying "Don't's" or in my "How to Read" that has just appeared in the N.Y. Herald "Books" simply say so. Or list the revered and unrevered authors you approve or disapprove of.²⁰

Pound stresses the importance of producing a coherent literary program: one that can also serve as a rallying point of unification between individual writers. Ford chose (initially) to disregard this aspect of Pound's advice. As we will see in a later chapter, Ford's decision to ignore Pound's largely sage advice caused problems for *Blues*. Retrospectively, it is easy to understand why Ford chose not need to heed this particular aspect of his advice: it was all part and parcel of his more general attempt to differentiate himself – and his first literary project – from his modernist elder.

It is at this point that the circular aspect of Ford's poetics begins to emerge.

Look again at Pound's advice about literary programs. Pound suggests that the best chance of constructing a viable manifesto is to issue a 'circular letter' signed by a select number of close confidantes:

As you don't live in the same town with yr start[ing] contribs, you can not have fortnightly meeting and rag each other. Best substitute is to use circular letters. For example write something (or use this note of mine) add your comments; send it on to Vogel, have him show it to Spector; and then send it to Bill Wms. each adding his blasts and blesses or comment of whateverdamn natr. Etc. When it has gone the rounds, you can send it back here.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid. p.223.

²¹ Ibid. p.224.

There are a number of things to be said about Pound's advice to Ford. Firstly, we should recall that *Blues* was edited and issued from the geographically remote town of Columbus, Mississippi. Obviously, Ford did not have the benefit of being able to meet and 'rag' the 'starting' contributors to the first issue of *Blues*. It is important to recognize, as Pound did, that Ford's geographical isolation made the exchange of circular letters an absolute necessity. Secondly, we need to appreciate that Pound's suggestions are not as altruistic as they first appear. Reading between the lines, we can see that Pound was trying to wrest a degree of editorial control from Ford. Pound wanted Ford to deliver any sort of completed *Blues* circular to him in Rapallo. It is clear that Pound wanted the final word when it comes to deciding the eventual direction of *Blues*. Characteristically, Pound was trying to stamp his authority upon *Blues* and, with a well-documented history of similar attempts, such an intervention was only to be expected.²² However, it is not his attempted intervention that is of note: it is the fact that he wanted the process of circular exchange – and the exchange of circulars – to take place within a clearly delineated and hermetically sealed sphere.

In other words, Pound wanted to foster a collective sensibility in a relatively controlled, secure, and stable environment. At the same time, Pound wanted the results of such a process of circular consensus to be kept *private*: at least until he could bestow his authoritative signature upon any sort of hypothetical *Blues* circular. When it came to *Blues*, the approach that Pound preferred demanded private consensus and codification *prior* to potential public distribution. But Ford was having none of it. Ford chose not to issue a codified literary manifesto in the first issue of *Blues*. Nor, it must be said, did any of the other eight issues of *Blues* carry anything vaguely like the sort of sanctioned literary manifesto outlined by Pound.²³ Ford's decision not to follow Pound's advice is an early instance of differentiation. It is not, however, an outright rejection of Pound's advice.

²² One could cite the example of Pound's involvement in transforming Dora Marsden's feminist successor to *The New Freewoman* into the Imagist magazine *The Egoist* as a more successful example of external editorial intervention and appropriation.

²³ The closest approximation of an early *Blues* manifesto appeared in Eugene Jolas's famous expatriate little magazine *transition*. Printed in the so-called 'Revolution of the Word' issue of *transition* (June 1929), this anonymous advertisement referred to the unorthodox 'haven' of Ford's 'collaborative experiment' as 'a magazine of a *more complete revolt*'. Although this anonymous document has much to tell us about Ford's first editorial venture, it must also be approached with a fair degree of caution. Whilst it might be tempting to describe this document as an example of a fully-fledged *Blues* manifesto, it should be noted that Ford's subsequent editorial decisions, actions, and comments regarding the intended publication of a definitive *Blues* 'Program' in 1931 contradict such a reading (see chapter six for further details).

Ford certainly recognized the important role that literary circulars could play in the construction of poetic identity. So much so that it became an ingrained aspect of his individual poetic approach. In contrast to the controlled process of rigorous mediation of collaborative material favored by Pound, Ford's editorial approach in *Blues* was determined by his demonstrative poetic sensibility. Eschewing any sort of high modernist sanctioned literary manifesto, *Blues* was a demotic literary space – or symbolic 'open house' – where poetic dialogue could flourish without the need for prior mediation or codification.²⁴ Poetic dialogues and exchanges played out at their own pace in the public forum of Ford's *Blues* without fear of editorial censure. *Blues* assumed the form of a metaphorical crucible in which a variety of outlooks were able to interact, clash, ferment, and develop into discernible poetic identities. In addition, the results of such exchanges often came to either shape or reflect the direction and evolving identity of Ford's little magazine.

A good example of this sort of exchange takes place between Parker Tyler and Charles Henri Ford in the fourth issue of *Blues* (May 1929). As we will see, Tyler (a later assistant editor of *Blues*) came to play a prominent role in Ford's literary career. Ford and Tyler were life-long friends and occasional literary collaborators. The original *Blues* housed their first literary exchange. Running parallel to each other, Tyler's 'From a Slender Coffin' and Ford's 'Four From Tension' are grouped together under the umbrella term: 'Frustrations'. Tyler's contribution is divided up into three poems: 'He the More, I the Less', 'Instruction of the Sensibility', and 'For Some Pins'. Ford's is comprised of four: 'why ears', 'n. b.', 'denudation of tributes', and 'poem'. I want here to read Tyler's first poem, 'He the More, I the Less' alongside Ford's 'why ears'. I want to suggest that Ford's oblique and formally discrete piece is best understood as a direct response to the relatively more conventional contribution delivered by Tyler. My choice of words is quite deliberate: Ford and Tyler had to yet meet when their 'frustrated' exchange appeared in May 1929. Ford and Tyler's exchange was conducted through the United States postal network.

²⁴ Kenneth Rexroth was the first to acknowledge this aspect of Ford's editorial sensibility in *Blues*: 'Everybody, judging from the contributions of the "Blues group", you and I included, seems to know a great deal more about where he is going and why, has at least the sketch of a program of personal discipline outlined, than he did in the beginning last year. These programs may be a great deal more divergent than we expected then, but we are at least held together by a common disgust a common enemy and a common persecution. *You at least have not been an ameliorator, a via medist*'. Kenneth Rexroth to Charles Henri Ford, 30 November 1929. Emphasis added. Beinecke Library, Yale (hereafter Beinecke). YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 157.

Tyler's 'He the More, I the Less' is a poetic treatment of the vagaries of desire and devotion. The speaker of Tyler's poem is consumed by all-encompassing devotion to an unnamed beloved:

I there should be first
 Kneeling, having eclipsed the
 Bright sun, reaching him
 In his bed,
 Better loved and more willing
 To be fondled because of
 Things which came before most
 Sweetly in the shinelight
 Memory of the heart a talking²⁵

However, as the poem progresses it becomes clear that all is not well in the matters of the 'heart':

The breeze that cheats while I love him,
 All over the world will be in losing
 Memory the part of him I hold here now
 Sweetly in the bed a grim giving all of him (B1: 4, 96)

Increasingly, it appears that the 'willing' devotee of Tyler's poem is locked in an oppressive relationship with a selfish lover (the clue is in the title):

I taking the massive moving
 Of the willlessness from bed and cover
 To be mine the how he does not give
 Of what he is... (B1: 4, 96)

Despite recognizing the numerous shortcomings of his supposed beloved, Tyler's devotee seeks nevertheless to

Live and die an honest giver

²⁵ Parker Tyler 'From a Slender Coffin', Charles Henri Ford (ed.), *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms* (1: 4, 1929), p.96. All references are taken from the Johnson Reprint copy of *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms* (1-9), New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967). Hereafter abbreviated (B) cited parenthetically by volume, issue, and page number.

So I make a breathing
 Wind and what I lose
 Is national and overcome
 By what I gain in love
 A paradise
 Of breezeless monitude (B1: 4, 97)

The 'paradise' evoked at the end of Tyler's poem is far from perfect. In fact, it is downright stifling. Tyler's neologism ('monitude') suggests as much. Tyler's splicing together of 'monad' and 'solitude' implies that the arid and 'breezeless' idyll that the steadfastly 'honest' devotee claims to have gained through 'love' is destined to be a lonely one. Tyler's devotee is well aware of the absurdity that lies at the heart of his illusory, solitary 'paradisal estate' (B1: 4, 97). Yet he seems unable to make a positive intervention in his 'paradise / Of breezeless monitude'. The reader is left with the impression that the emotional life of Tyler's devoted and 'honest giver' is characterized by undue compromise, self-deception, and meek passivity.

Not so the speaking subject of Ford's '*why ears*'. Ford's '*why ears*' can be read as a riposte to the passive emotional penitence evoked in Tyler's 'He the More, I the Less'.²⁶ Ford's oblique '*why ears*' is best understood as a personal address to an unnamed object of desire:

why should you lie dead
 at ten o'clock then carelessly
 talk and rise into a gold awakening

 then (tell me) why
 should you as fondling
 draw in the scent through
 two
 chiseled
 nostrils (B1: 4, 99)

It soon becomes clear that the unnamed owner of these 'two / chiseled / nostrils' is the cause of some undisclosed irritation:

²⁶ The theme of penitence also preoccupies Tyler in his final 'Frustration' ('For Some, Pins'): 'only / there is a mighty toiling of memory for penitence / as though all things rushed / and flung themselves upon a sword' (B1: 4, 98).

why are you never specific
 the morning is definite the wind is
 you
 are a ghost on horseback
 or the image of a hotness caught in ice
 you are the loophole in a hangrope
 and i forever harmonious
 discords sagging about your head and ears (B1:4, 99)

Certainly, the references to 'morning' awakenings and 'wind' in '*why ears*' recall Tyler's evocations of breezes and bedroom scenes. However, we can also discern noticeable differences between the respective poems of Ford and Tyler. Perhaps the most marked difference between Tyler and Ford lies in their respective approaches to the objects of desire. Ford's account is much more ambivalent than the one that was previously offered by Tyler. '*why ears*' contains nothing approaching the sort of devotional awe expressed in 'He the More, I the Less'. To quote Tyler, it seems that Ford's 'harmonious' and questioning narrator is steadfastly refusing to be drawn into a condition of passive 'willlessness'. Ford's poem is punctuated by moments of assertiveness ('tell me') and a gnawing sense of personal dissatisfaction: 'why are you never specific'. Ford's object of desire is negatively formulated as 'the loophole in a hangrope'. Nor is there anything even close to Tyler's admittedly arid 'paradise estate' in '*why ears*'. Ford's poem ends on a note of dissonance: 'discords sagging about your head and ears'.

Ford and Tyler's respective treatment of poetic form is another difference. Much of Tyler's 'He the More, I the Less' tends toward interlocking internal rhyme and occasional enjambment: Ford's '*why ears*' is an example of fragmentary free verse. Indeed, it is tempting to read a line like Ford's 'why are you never specific' as a playful rebuttal of Tyler's characteristic preference for indirect symbolist allusion.²⁷ In marked contrast to Tyler, Ford privileges direct declaration in '*why ears*': 'the morning is definite the wind is /

²⁷ We might well attribute Tyler's predilection for indirect poetic evocation over direct representation to his schooling in Symbolist literature. Marjorie Perloff has commented, albeit in highly critical terms, on Tyler's indebtedness to Symbolist techniques in his long-poem *The Granite Butterfly* (1945): 'a symbolism that, unlike Mallarmé's or Eliot's or Stevens's, is largely reductive in its one-to-one equivalencies'. Marjorie Perloff, 'Late Late Modern', *William Carlos Williams Review*, 22: 1 (Spring 1996). Accessed through: <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/perloff/parker.html>. Last accessed: 16 March 2011.

you'.²⁸ Where Tyler cloaks the object of his devotion in breezes that summon suggestions of emotional turmoil and trigger memories of his often-absent loved one, Ford prefers to present his desired in a number of increasingly bizarre and vivid images of juxtaposition that would later become his poetic trademark. However, whilst the approach and form of 'why ears' differs from 'He the More, I the Less', it should not stop us appreciating that Ford is dialoguing with Tyler.²⁹ The basic point is that Tyler and Ford's dialogue was an early example of the sort of poetic postal exchange that would come to play a significant role in the latter's career. Tyler's 'Frustrations' provided Ford with an initial springboard to formulate his responses and develop his own poetic sensibility. The posted exchange of ideas with likeminded individuals such as Tyler furnished Ford with a potential means to sidestep the problem of his geographical isolation.³⁰

Ford found in Tyler a more than capable, likeminded, and willing poetic ally. Both poets wanted to make their mark in the realm of modernism. And both felt unable to make an impression whilst certain avatars of high modernism still dominated in contemporary literary circles. In particular, Pound came to represent an obstacle in the path of Ford and Tyler's personal poetic and editorial development. Tyler recognized this in an undated letter sent to Pound:

²⁸ At the same time, it is important to note that whilst Ford's individual poetic sensibility can be said to differ significantly from that of his friend and collaborator, he is by no means simply dismissive of Tyler. Indeed, I think it possible to read these two 'Frustrations' as the tentative beginning of a productive poetic exchange that goes on to deal at length with topics such as non-normative desire. Arguably, Ford and Tyler's dialogue culminates in their collaboration: *The Young and Evil* (1933). Amongst other things, Ford and Tyler's *The Young and Evil* seeks to debunk the sort of sentimental devotion displayed in 'He the More, I the Less': 'He was quite sure their love was a fabrication or a convenience or a recompense and he did not believe in their love as love'. Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, *The Young and Evil* (London: Gay Men Press, 1989), p.72.

²⁹ Ford was always up-front about the fundamental differences between his and Tyler's respective poetic sensibilities. See Ira Cohen's interview with Charles Henri Ford. Winston Leyland (ed.), *Gay Sunshine Interviews: Volume One* (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1984), p.43.

³⁰ The use of circular letters and dispatches from Paris, London, and New York in the later issues of *Blues* is another example of Ford's early eagerness to construct routes of communication through the postal network. *Blues* also carried advertisements for other sympathetic little magazines: *Bozart: The Bi-Monthly Poetry Review*, *Palo Verde: A Radical Southwestern Poetry Review*, *Japm: The Poetry Weekly*, *Contemporary Verse*, *Morada*, *The Hound and Horn*, *Tambour*, *Janus: A Quarterly Review of Letters*, *Thought and the New Mythology*, *Alhambra: A Monthly Magazine Devoted to Spain and the Americas*, and *Revista de Advance: A Cuban Monthly of the Newer Arts and Letters*. Ford's decision to give over advertising space to magazines like *Alhambra* and *Revista de Advance* can be thought of as an early instance of his desire to establish networks of ever-widening geographical and international scope.

Therefore we are stopping for a few moments to speak to you; we agree with little you have ever said in theoretic and practical direction; i think we have passed up everybody you have noticed recently except zukofsky but he IS good.³¹

Tyler's rancor stems from a sense of frustration at the fact that Pound had already achieved what he and Ford had yet to in the 'second quarter' the 20th century:

The longer we move desperately around the clock, permitting its mobility, concerned with the familiar gestures of writing and editing a magazine, the more perverse, the more dilatory, the blinder you seem from the peculiar and oracular vantage point you have established for yourself in this century, first and now second quarter.³²

Tyler is speaking on behalf of Ford in the above letter. As we can see in the first extract, Tyler quickly recognized the need for poetic differentiation. Taking his cue from Ford, Tyler seems to be turning his back on Pound's 'theoretic and practical' advice. Tyler makes it clear that he and Ford were not prepared simply to rely on the scraps thrown to them by Pound.³³ Ford and Tyler were tired of being treated like Pound's 'children'.³⁴ They wanted to carve out their own niche – or 'vantage point' – within the realm of modernism.³⁵

Tyler's anthology *Modern Things* (1934) represents one such attempt at constructing a stable, critical vantage point that could be used as a literary launch pad. Consider Tyler's introduction to *Modern Things*:

Therefore, the intention of this anthology is to present an elect body of work, composed by those moderns who have worked successfully in literary styles for a number of years to the accompaniment of ever-growing critical and general recognition, together with those younger moderns who, not yet intrenched [sic] in the libraries with volumes of their own or with anthology

³¹ Parker Tyler to Ezra Pound [undated]. Beinecke. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 176.

³² Parker Tyler to Ezra Pound [undated]. Beinecke. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 176.

³³ Louis Zukofsky is a notable exception and will be considered momentarily.

³⁴ The term belongs to Pound: 'Thank you my children. Moriturus saluto. My perversity has always been apparent to those who insisted on considering my marginalia without ref/ to the centre'. Ezra Pound to Charles Henri Ford, 24 November 1930. Beinecke Library. Yale University. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 144.

³⁵ Ford's hope was that *Blues* would provide would such a secure 'vantage point' from which to launch a differential assault at the structures and strictures of high modernism. However, the premature collapse of *Blues* in 1930 temporarily halted such an assault.

reputations, and while not, consistently, so typical of thoroughly individuated styles, have had successes definitely meriting critical attention.³⁶

Amongst this 'elect' are Tyler, Ford, and a number of other so-called *Blues* writers like Louis Zukofsky, Harold Rosenberg, Joseph Rocco, and Lionel Abel. With his *Modern Things*, Tyler is trying to clear the way for the inclusion of younger poetic voices in the contemporary critical reckoning of modernism. Ford's close collaborator wants his work (and that of his friend and former publisher) to be the equal of high modern writers like Pound and T.S. Eliot. About this, Tyler is unequivocal: 'These poems have been collected with applied reference to the unity of a continuous contemporary literary impulse, operating through related and developing modes of writing'.³⁷

However, Tyler does not simply equate: he also differentiates. We can see this in most clearly in a poem like Tyler's early 'Testament from the Inheritors of the Wasteland'.³⁸ In Tyler's poem – whilst an actor 'remembers and rehearses his lines' – subject spectators 'remember the emphasis / We forget to remember this rehearsal'.³⁹ The actor of the poem, according to Tyler, 'must be / In an Eliot-hurry'.⁴⁰ In contrast, Tyler's unnamed subjects 'Must not be in an Eliot-hurry. We must remember our dignity'.⁴¹ Tyler never specifies exactly what constitutes Eliot's 'hurry'. Instead, Tyler's metaphor of rehearsal transmutes into a stilted Shakespearian balcony scene, one in which a 'honeysweet Romeo might be intercepted / By absence of that elocutionary sound'⁴² and where

The night is a bouquet of a strange delay
And the day an instant of impetuous waiting
Cool and deliberate as a fan.⁴³

³⁶ Parker Tyler, 'Introduction', Parker Tyler (ed.), *Modern Things* (New York: Galleon Press, 1934), p.5. *Modern Things* features the work of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, E.E. Cummings, Marianne Moore, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Gertrude Stein, Harold Rosenberg, H.R. Hays, Paul Eaton Reeve, Joseph Rocco, Lionel Abel, Charles Henri Ford, Carl Rasoki, Louis Zukofsky, Raymond Larson, and Parker Tyler.

³⁷ Tyler, *Modern Things*, p.5.

³⁸ Yes: Tyler really did misquote the famous title of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922).

³⁹ Parker Tyler, *The Will of Eros: Selected Poems 1930-1970* (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1972), p.9.

⁴⁰ Tyler, *Will of Eros*, p.9.

⁴¹ Ibid. p.9.

⁴² Ibid. p.11.

⁴³ Ibid.

Tyler's invocation of this nightly 'bouquet' is soon followed with lines conveying the position of the spectators who are watching the rehearsal: 'Under a sun of summer sumptuousness / We grow irrevocably, simply, tan'.⁴⁴ Tyler's account of 'cool and deliberate' waiting is far from positive, perplexed as it is by the unidentifiable 'bouquet' arising from a 'strange delay'. It is also revealing. That is to say, frustrated younger poets like Tyler and Ford are impatient, and hardly inclined to tolerate even 'an instant of impetuous waiting'. They are demanding recognition whilst simultaneously differentiating themselves from their modernist elders:

There is something we do
That is called Nothing that the actor
Does not do. Something that within the Plot
Of time we do not plot. We are the unplotters
Unstringers. We grasp the scissors
From the palsied hand and we unscissor
And deflower the dropped forgotten flower
That the stagehand fingers for a moment, then puts back.⁴⁵

Notice that Tyler here sets the harried Eliotic actor in direct opposition to the paradoxically calm, yet eager spectator/writer. Notice also the language used by Tyler to define the actions of the imagined spectator. Tyler begins by describing the actions of the spectator in terms of negation. This negative emphasis should not detract from the process of attempted succession highlighted in the passage, all of which is described in revealing terms. For example, we have Tyler's suggestion that 'We grasp the scissors / from the palsied hand'. But who is it that grasps the scissors? According to Tyler: 'the unstringers' and 'unplotters' that comprise the poem's audience of the spectator/writer. These 'unstringers' and 'unplotters' subsequently begin to 'unscissor / And deflower the dropped forgotten flower' that has been cast aside from the Eliotic, palsied hand.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p.10.

⁴⁶ All this talk of scissoring and (de)flowering is highly suggestive. On a superficial level, Tyler's talk of 'scissoring' might be considered an allusion to well-known avant-garde literary and aesthetic techniques like collage. Tyler's references to a process of *un*-scissoring are reminiscent of the sort of aesthetic negation and collagist literary techniques favored by the Dadaists (and the later Surrealists). In particular, Tyler's lines evoke the instructions of Tristan Tzara: 'Take a newspaper. Take some scissors. Choose from this paper an article of the length you want to make your poem. Cut out the article. Next

Poets like Ford and Tyler are the ‘unstringers’ and ‘unplotters’ who seek to ‘deflower’ the flower cast aside by those elder modernists like Eliot.⁴⁷ Whilst Eliot’s ‘Prufrock’ wonders ‘Do I dare / Disturb the universe? / In a minute there is time / For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse’,⁴⁸ Tyler’s inheritors of the ‘wasteland’ seek to ‘seize the lights’.⁴⁹ Similarly, whereas Eliot concedes that this ‘*is the way the world ends / Not with a bang but with a whimper*’,⁵⁰ Tyler declares that

puny destructive life
can no longer

detain us
valiant sobs
VICTORY⁵¹

Their respective treatments of sexuality also differ significantly. Eliot’s aversion to any poetic expression of sexuality is well known. We need only to look to *The Waste Land* to find Eliot’s infamous depiction of a ‘lovely woman’ who ‘stoops to folly / and Paces about her room again, alone’.⁵² In stark contrast, Eliot’s ‘inheritor’ celebrates sexuality:

being the starred god, running:
his legs shapely-swift, white, darkening
their languor, their clanging
languor, supple

carefully cut out each of the words that makes up this article and put them all in a bag. Shake gently. Next take out each cutting one after the other. Copy conscientiously in the order in which they left the bag. The poem will resemble you’. Tristan Tzara, *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries* (John Calder: London, 1977), p.39. Like Ford, Tyler would have been aware of the controversy caused by the earlier arrival of Dadaism in the United States (see Dickran Tashjian’s *Skyscraper Primitives*). At the same time, Tyler’s links with William Carlos Williams would have most likely ensured that Tyler was exposed to Dadaism – via the good doctor’s *Kora in Hell: Improvisations* (1920) – and Surrealism at an early stage in his career. This in spite of Williams’s famously ambivalent attitude to the continental origins of orthodox Surrealism: ‘Surrealism does not lie. It is the single truth. It is an epidemic. It is. It is just words. But it is French. it is their invention: one. That language is in constant revolution, constantly being covered, merded, stolen, slided. Theirs’, William Carlos Williams, *Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams* (New York: Random House, 1954), p.96.

⁴⁷ This camp ‘unscissoring’ of a profoundly pessimistic, Eliotic version of austere (and heterosexual) high modernism might also be said to anticipate the eventual flowering of the arch dandy of Pop: Andy Warhol. Warhol features in the next chapter.

⁴⁸ T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), p.14.

⁴⁹ Tyler, *Will of Eros*, p.10.

⁵⁰ Eliot, *Collected Poems*, p.92.

⁵¹ Parker Tyler, ‘Hollywood Dream Suite’, *Modern Things*, p.83.

⁵² Eliot, *Collected Poems*, p.72.

in the youth's head,
 --clanging and awaking a patter: as
 flesh against flesh, thigh against genital
 awakes
 and is a huge clangour⁵³

Tyler's post-*Blues* poem is deeply sensual and direct⁵⁴: there is no sense of a high modern sort of ironic distancing or impersonal detachment.⁵⁵ In spite of the characteristic inversions, the same is true of something like Ford's early 'Optional': 'my hands are warmed on icy foreheads and my thighs made cold with / consecrate lusts' (B1: 2, 38).

All this naked lyrical intimacy and emotionality would have most likely horrified Eliot. After all, this was a poet who believed that 'i[t] is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life, that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting'.⁵⁶ We can see this elsewhere in Eliot's seminal 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919):

[t]he point of view which I am struggling to attack is perhaps related to the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul: for my meaning is, that the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those which become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, in the personality.⁵⁷

I quote Eliot's famous essay at length here because it was the impersonal aspect of the high modernist 'wasteland' that these two 'inheritors' were reacting against. Especially Ford. As we will see in the proceeding sections of this chapter, poetry became a vehicle for the expression of personality – sometimes singular; often communal – in Ford's later circular

⁵³ Parker Tyler, *Vision: Argument by Anti-Poem* (New York: Privately Printed, 1934), pp.13-14.

⁵⁴ This instance of Tyler's newfound poetic directness is in marked contrast to his early 'Frustrations'. In this regard, it would seem that Ford's influence has rubbed-off on his collaborator.

⁵⁵ Nor is there any evidence of the sort of modernist citation pioneered by Eliot and adopted by other modernists. Indeed, Tyler elsewhere questions the continued validity of such a poetic method: 'In a world of quotations / Whose is the authoritative source? / Not in your poem, Auden, / A quotation of quotations'. Tyler, *Vision: Argument by Anti-Poem*, p.5. The high modernist use of citation is something that we will also consider in our later discussion of Zukofsky.

⁵⁶ T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1999), p.20.

⁵⁷ Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p.19-20.

poetics. As we will also see, one of the attendant consequences of Ford's commitment to poetry as/of personality is that we begin to appreciate just how easily categories of modernism and postmodernism bleed together.

But first, I want to situate Ford and Tyler's shared sense of frustration in wider relation to what was a growing contemporary dissatisfaction with the austere and profoundly pessimistic high modernism of poets like Eliot. More specifically, I want to put forward a brief – and somewhat truncated – account of another *Blues* contributor: Louis Zukofsky. For reasons that I hope will become clear, despite their shared frustrations with established modes of modernist literary production, Zukofsky's subsequent – post-*Blues* – poetic career moves can be contrasted productively to those of Ford.⁵⁸

Zukofsky shared Ford and Tyler's frustration with the dominant Eliotic version of high modernism. We can see this in Zukofsky's early 'Poem beginning "The"'. As is well known, Zukofsky considered his 'Poem beginning "The"' a 'direct response'⁵⁹ to Eliot's canonical high-modernist text: *The Waste Land*. Critics like Bruce Comens have demonstrated that – much like Eliot's masterpiece – Zukofsky's poem 'takes the Great War as the fundamental fact of modern life, the inescapable background of the modern wasteland'.⁶⁰ Bob Perelman recognises the 'aggressive gesture' and nature of Zukofsky's appropriation of his 'immediate predecessors'.⁶¹ Zukofsky adopts this aggressive approach in order to distinguish his poetic outlook from that of Eliot: 'I intended to tell him why, spiritually speaking, a wimpus was still possible and might even bear fruit of another generation'.⁶²

Zukofsky proceeds to 'tell' Eliot why 'a wimpus was still' possible in a variety of ways. For instance, Zukofsky uses parody to illustrate his point:

- 25 Are dust in the waste land of a raven-
 winged evening.
 26 And why if the waste land has been explored,

⁵⁸ I have in mind the *late* career moves of Ford that we outlined in the preceding chapter.

⁵⁹ Louis Zukofsky to Ezra Pound, December 12th 1930, Barry Ahearn (ed.), *Pound / Zukofsky: Selected Letters of Ezra Pound and Louis Zukofsky* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987), p.78.

⁶⁰ Bruce Comens, *Apocalypse and After: Modern Strategy and Postmodern Tactics in Pound, Williams, and Zukofsky* (Tuscaloosa: Alabama UP, 1995), p.134.

⁶¹ Bob Perelman, *The Trouble With Genius: Reading Pound, Joyce, Stein, and Zukofsky* (Berkeley: California UP, 1994), p.175.

⁶² Louis Zukofsky to Ezra Pound, 12 December 1930. *Pound / Zukofsky* pp.78-79.

travelled over, circumscribed,
 27 Are there only wrathless skeletons exhumed
 new planted in its sacred wood⁶³

Zukofsky scrutinizes Eliotic pessimism in the above extract: constantly challenging ('why') and questioning the morbid exhumation of 'wrathless skeletons'. Any potential doubts about the fact that Zukofsky is referring to Eliot and his famous 'waste land' are quickly dispelled by the presence of the parodic, line-by-line indexing system adopted in 'Poem beginning "The"'. Parodic citation is a central component in Zukofsky's critique of high modernist literary assumptions. Tim Woods notes that it is now generally accepted that 'Zukofsky's poem is concerned with 'cultural assimilation and identity, about the subject's unease with the values of a different literary tradition and culture'.⁶⁴ As the Yiddish-speaking son of Lithuanian Jewish immigrants, Zukofsky was at all times attendant to the sensitive questions of cultural assimilation.

Not so the high modernists whom Zukofsky counted amongst his poetic elders. Pound's and Eliot's desire for the return to states of utopian, Hellenic cultural unity depends on what Charles Altieri has identified as 'a unified structure of images and ideas, derived primarily from the traditions of "civilised" reflective societies'.⁶⁵ Negative connotations about antagonistic appropriation came attached with high modernist assumptions about cultural ideals. Steve Shoemaker notes that such a cultural 'ideal involves assumptions about the permissible range of "difference" that becomes, at least in Pound's case, more sinister as the cultural stakes rise'.⁶⁶ Invoking Pound's anti-Semitism, Shoemaker surmises that 'culture could easily provoke hostility rather than allay it'.⁶⁷ Moreover, high modernist insensitivity – or even outright hostility – to cultural 'difference' could often be registered at a textual level via the use of quotation:

⁶³ Louis Zukofsky, *Complete Short Poetry* (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1997), p.10.

⁶⁴ Tim Woods, *The Poetics of the Limit: Ethics and Politics in Contemporary American Poetry* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p.27.

⁶⁵ Charles Altieri, *Enlarging the Temple: New Directions in American Poetry during the 1960s* (London: Associated UP, 1979), p.48.

⁶⁶ Steve Shoemaker, 'Between Contact and Exile: Louis Zukofsky's Poetry of Survival', Mark Scroggins (ed.) *Upper Limit Music: The Writing of Louis Zukofsky* (Tuscaloosa: Alabama UP, 1997), p.37.

⁶⁷ Shoemaker, 'Between Contact and Exile,' p.37.

The image for quotations thus employed in the modernist praxis becomes, rather fittingly, that of an immigrant: a permanent resident with an alien registration number, documented by, as the case may be, quotation marks, italics, duplications of foreign words, or various forms of notes and indexes.⁶⁸

We can now more fully appreciate the role that Zukofsky's parodic indexing system plays in his critique of high modernist literary assumptions. Ming-Qian Ma reasons that, in conventional high modernist usage, 'quotations have to forfeit their independence in use in order to facilitate a textual hierarchy'.⁶⁹ Zukofsky reverses this process by first inhabiting it: he will 'read their Donne as mine, / And leopard in their spots'.⁷⁰ By foregrounding the very 'alienness' that modernism traditionally sought either to assimilate or efface in his parodic indexing system, Zukofsky draws attention to the cultural and racial hierarchies that implicitly underpin modernist aesthetic representation. Assigning 'registration numbers' to each and every line of 'Poem beginning "The"', Zukofsky stresses cultural and aesthetic specificity over unreflective, idealized universalism.⁷¹ Zukofsky's critique of Eliotic assumptions is at once far-reaching and subtle. Indeed, far more so than anything proposed by the similarly frustrated Tyler and Ford. However, despite the thoroughness of his early critique, the fact remains that Zukofsky's subsequent poetic career moves more closely adhered to established modernist strictures than Ford's.⁷²

⁶⁸ Ming-Qian Ma, 'A "no man's land!": Postmodern Citationality in Zukofsky's "Poem beginning "The"'. *Upper Limit Music – The Writing of Louis Zukofsky* (1997) p.134.

⁶⁹ Ma, 'A "no man's land!"', p.137.

⁷⁰ Zukofsky, *Complete Short Poetry*, p.18.

⁷¹ Zukofsky's poetic articulation of non-assimilable cultural specificity at the expense of universalism can be tied to his localist modernist sensibility. Given Charles Henri Ford's beginnings in Mississippi, one might think it only logical and productive to consider his status as a regional modernist in relation to Zukofsky's localism. However, it is important to note that, aside from the interjections of southern colloquialism into his poetry, at no stage in his career is Ford committed to the investigation – or construction – of what might be termed a 'southern' modernism. As we will see in this chapter, Ford's outlook was at all times more international than regional. From an early stage in his career, Ford's internationalist stance attracted criticism. For instance, some early reviewers attacked the supposed absence of southern aesthetic 'rhythms' in *Blues* as an implicit betrayal of Ford's Southern heritage. Similarly, prominent and influential Southern modernist writers like John Crowe Ransom were extremely hostile towards Ford's poetry. Ford's relationship with Ransom will be considered later in this thesis.

⁷² The element of modernist adherence in Zukofsky's work is addressed by Don Byrd: 'Although "Poem beginning "The"' is a travesty of Eliot's and Pound's insistence upon *the* tradition, Zukofsky also recognizes that cultural order is necessarily one context of all and *All*'. Don Byrd, 'The Shape of Zukofsky's Canon', Carroll F. Terrell (ed.), *Louis Zukofsky: Man and Poet*, (Orono: Maine UP, 1979), p.164. *All* is the title of an edition of Zukofsky's shorter poetry.

Consider Zukofsky's modernistic preference for poetic and personal autonomy. In 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' (1903), George Simmel reasons that many problems pertaining to 'modern life derive from the claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces, of historical heritage, of external culture, and the technique of life'.⁷³ In many ways, Zukofsky's career moves validate the analysis proposed by Simmel. From the outset, Zukofsky was '[s]uspicious and even disdainful of both the contemporary literary marketplace and what he felt to be the homogenizing tendency of academic literary history'.⁷⁴ Zukofsky retreats the familiar modernist path of withdrawal and retreat from the compromised public cultural sphere. Libbie Rifkin details Zukofsky's desire for poetic autonomy, before adding that 'his commitment to poetic autonomy condemned him to a passive role in the distribution of cultural capital, a position that he did not accept easily'.⁷⁵ Rifkin ascribes Zukofsky's eventual condemnation to a shift in the networks of poetic exchange:

Modernist networks—with Pound at their centre—created the conditions for his poetic debut, but just as he was beginning to acquire enough cachet to shape the field in his own image, the institutional structures sustaining his still-fragile public identity collapsed, or at least shifted significantly.⁷⁶

Zukofsky's unwillingness to wear the 'many hats'⁷⁷ (editor, promoter, *circulator*) required of the younger innovative poet thus contributed to his marginalization.⁷⁸ Broadly speaking, Zukofsky's subsequent career moves assume the form of a poetic retreat:

Less an effort to intervene in the contemporary literary field than to guard against its fickleness, Zukofsky's later work retreats into the more controllable domain of home, family, and a language that would purge itself of social exigency by rejecting models of communication and exchange...⁷⁹

⁷³ George Simmel, *The Sociology of George Simmel* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1950), p.409.

⁷⁴ Libbie Rifkin, *Career Moves: Olson, Creeley, Zukofsky, Berrigan, and the American Avant-Garde* (Madison: Wisconsin UP, 2000), p.72.

⁷⁵ Rifkin, *Career Moves*, p.75.

⁷⁶ Rifkin, p.74.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p.75.

⁷⁸ Ford's willingness to engage with the systems of cultural production and reception is in complete contrast to Zukofsky. We are about to consider the specifically circular nature of such an engagement.

⁷⁹ Rifkin, p.76.

This withdrawal is dramatized in Zukofsky's long poem: "A". Zukofsky's 563-page long poem ends in his son's house on Arbutus Street, Brooklyn: 'a destination reachable only by readers close enough to the Zukofsky family to know where they live'.⁸⁰ Rifkin notes that with the closing section of "A" ("A"-24), 'the poem symbolically relocates to the conjugal home, or at least a "musical" version of it'.⁸¹

Critics have often sought to frame Zukofsky's domestic turn as a localist gesture congruent with ideas of pluralistic postmodern aesthetic representation.⁸² Whilst I do not seek to dispute such claims, it is important to stress – as Rifkin does – that Zukofsky's retreat also represents an attempt to 'purge itself of social exigency by rejecting models of communication and exchange' (Rifkin). The trajectory of Zukofsky's career seems to epitomize a modernist poetic autonomy taken to a logical extreme. Of course, Zukofsky's late turn towards a private and stable domestic environment echoes the Pound of *Drafts & Fragments*. Equally, Zukofsky's poetic evocation of his Brooklyn home chimes with Ford's attempts at constructing a suitably 'homely' domestic setting in his late haiku and final *Blues*. However, the differences between the respective poetic domiciles of Zukofsky and Ford are pronounced. Where Zukofsky turns his back on the pressures of 'social exigency' (Rifkin), Ford craves the stimulation presupposed by collaborative poetic exchange and communication. Where Zukofsky privileges domestic autonomy and privacy, Ford feels much more comfortable in the presence of friends both old and new: drawn together from the various corners of the world via the power of the post.

The Chainpoem: Curving Back to Meet / The Ever Widening Circle of the Infinite:

The circular and collaborative aspect of Ford's inclusive postal poetic approach comes to the fore at the beginning of the 1940s. Ford's so-called 'chainpoem experiments' continue in the circular vein of poetic exchange previously established in *Blues*:

⁸⁰ Ibid. p.79.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² I have in mind Bruce Comen's distinction between modernist strategies and postmodern tactics. Modernist poetic strategy is defined by Comens as the attempt 'to develop a new and larger strategy that would revitalize art and society'. Comens, *Apocalypse and After*, p.17. Strategy thus offers a totalizing, though somewhat inflexible, program of reconstruction. Postmodern tactics, on the other hand, are determined by an engagement in 'playful, disruptive tactics' that serve to counteract and even undermine grand strategic schemas. Comens, p.4.

The chainpoem is not only an intellectual sport but a collective invention. However, it is not a product of social collaboration in the sense that architecture is. Each poet is architect, supervisor, bricklayer, etc., of the construction. The blueprint of the chainpoem is the anonymous shape lying in a hypothetical joint imagination, which builds as though the poem were a series of either mathematical or dream progressions.⁸³

The first thing we notice here is the emphasis Ford places on the simultaneously private and public aspects of the chainpoem. Whilst the chainpoem is determined by the input of individual poets (or 'supervisors'), it is a resolutely 'collective invention': one that immediately complicates notions of poetic individuality and, moreover, autonomy.⁸⁴ Similarly, the 'anonymous' facet of the chainpoem 'blueprint' carries nebulous connotations that relate back to the uncoded, conversational, and demotic aspects of *Blues*. Eschewing any predetermined sort of architectural schema, the chainpoems allow for collaborative exchange – and revision – at the expense of any sort of strict literary manifesto. Nothing need be agreed upon in advance: poetic voices and views are all given equal airing.

At the same time, based as they are in a 'hypothetical joint imagination', Ford's chainpoem experiments attempt poetically to approximate Carl Jung's conception of the 'collective unconsciousness'. Ford's choice of language certainly has a Jungian ring to it. For instance, his evocation of an 'anonymous shape' that lurks at the bottom of the 'joint imagination' is clearly indebted to Jung's famous definition of the psychoanalytical 'archetype'. As described in Jung's seminal essay 'On the Psychology of the Unconscious' (1917), the typical primordial archetype is an 'idea that has been stamped on the human brain for aeons. That is why it lies ready to hand in the unconscious of every man. Only,

⁸³ Charles Henri Ford, 'How to Write a Chainpoem', James Laughlin (ed.), *New Directions in Prose & Poetry* (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1940), p.369.

⁸⁴ The complete list of chainpoem contributors: Charles Henri Ford, Parker Tyler, Katue Kitasono, Saburah Kuroda, Nagao Hirao, Kohiti Kihara, Saburo Nagayasu, Syuti Nagayasu, Takesi Koike, Giko Sirota, Minoru Yasosima, Tuneo Osada, Ryoozen Torii, Jyun Higasi, Tio Nakamura, Takesi Fuji, Norman McCaig, Dorian Cooke, Henry Treece, George Marion O'Donnell, Gordon Sylander, Hilary Arm, Troy Garrison, Nicolas Calas, Napier Towne, Forrest Anderson, Paul Eaton Reeve, Elgar Houghton, Townsend Miller, Harry Roskolenko, Robert Friend, J.F. Hendry, Conroy Maddox, Robert Melville, Nicholas Moore, John Bayliss, Mary Woodman, John Hastings, H.R. Hays, Harvey Breit, Robert Horen, Matta Echaurren, and Helen Neville.

certain conditions are needed to cause it to appear'.⁸⁵ Reading Jung, we get the distinct sense that Ford's chainpoems represented an ambitious and simultaneously ostentatious poetic attempt to tap into the hidden reservoir of these 'greatest and best thoughts of man [which] shape themselves upon these primordial images as upon a blueprint'.⁸⁶

Perhaps it was the grandeur of Ford's proposed collaborative gesture that accounted for the altogether muted reception garnered by the chainpoems upon their publication in 1940. Ford's chainpoems were met with a mixture of bewilderment and outright hostility.⁸⁷ John Peale Bishop's comments sum up the general reception of the chainpoems: 'I cannot but wonder why it occurred to him and his companions in the craft to do them at all, and why, having undertaken them, the world being what it is, their compositions should have turned out as they have'.⁸⁸ Whilst collaborative poetic experimentation during wartime might not be to everybody's taste, is Bishop right to call the very existence of the chainpoems into question? Given the need for solidarity and comradeship at times of global crisis, Bishop's argument against poetic collaboration is certainly curious:

For more than a year we have seen in continuous advance of devastation an army long prepared and disciplined to the death. And I cannot but ask why, in this year of 1940, in the midst of a war in which the conquerors have left nothing conceivable to chance, in which the exact methods have been adopted to promote a brutal triumph, why so many poets have collaborated on a work from which discipline has been deliberately discarded and which, if it is to succeed, can only do so by the happiest of hazards.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Carl Gustav Jung, 'On the Psychology of the Unconscious' (1917), Sir Hebert Read (ed.), *Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume Seven: Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), p.69.

⁸⁶ Jung, 'On the Psychology of the Unconscious', p.69. Notice Ford's direct reference to the archetypal 'blueprint' theorized by Jung.

⁸⁷ Dylan Thomas was particularly dismissive of Ford's chainpoem venture: 'And thank you for the collaborated poem. I liked bits of the language, but it didn't seem to make anything. It was very nice of you to ask me to collaborate, but I don't want to. I think a poet today or any other day is most pleasurably employed writing his own poems as well as he can. With all due lack of respect, I believe this chainpoem to be a pretentious, and lazy, game'. Dylan Thomas to Charles Henri Ford, 14 December 1939. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 15, Folder 3.

⁸⁸ John Peale Bishop, 'Chainpoems and Surrealism, 1940', James Laughlin (ed.), *New Directions in Prose & Poetry* (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1940), p.363

⁸⁹ Bishop, 'Chainpoems and Surrealism', p.363.

Bishop attacks the apparently 'ill-disciplined' element of chance inherent in the production of the chainpoem. Bishop concludes:

It is a necessary protest, but like so many protests, costly to those who make it. For it is the responsibility of the poet to be aware of every aspect of the speech he uses and to use less than the whole word is to aim at less than the whole man.⁹⁰

Bishop's criticism of the chainpoem is twofold. Firstly, Bishop's criticism of Ford's collaborative venture is underwritten by an anxiety pertaining to the potentially unwelcome 'cost' of poetic collaboration. Bishop is arguing that the inevitable 'cost' attached to the 'protest' of collaborative writing is the attendant – and wholly irresponsible – loss of authorial 'discipline' and control. To put it another way: implicit in Bishop's criticism of the chainpoem concept is a presupposition about poetic *autonomy*. In poetic collaborations like the chainpoems, it is impossible for any given writer to be in total control of 'every aspect of speech' because there are a number of other architects, supervisors, and bricklayers who have an equal say in the poetic process. This basic fact accounts for Bishop's disapproving comments. Like Zukofsky, Bishop is opposed to anything that might challenge the autonomy of the self-sufficient ('whole') individual.

In addition, Bishop somewhat disingenuously professes ignorance as to why the chainpoem 'compositions should have turned out as they have'. It is easy to understand the logic – and the literary heritage – of the chainpoem compositions. Ford's introduction is fairly self-explanatory:

Thus, after the first line is written, the problem of each poet, in turn, is to provide a line which may both "contradict" and carry forward the preceding line. The chain poet may attempt to include his unique style and make it intelligible to the poem; in which case the chainpoem will have a logical and spontaneous growth. Alternatively, using the surrealist approach, he may automatically add a line that springs from whatever is suggested by the preceding line.⁹¹

Ford emphasizes the avant-garde heritage of the chainpoems. The chainpoems were inspired by the Surrealist parlor game of 'exquisite corpse'. Mary Ann Caws notes that

⁹⁰ Ibid. p.363.

⁹¹ Ford, 'How to Write a Chainpoem', p.369.

'[t]hese experiments combined communality, performance, and personality. They took the measure of the collective mind'.⁹² Further, '[t]he point of the play is both collective and automatic: the unleashing of the marvelous or the irrational in a group, with each individual effort working toward the final result greater than the sum of its parts'.⁹³ The chainpoems should be thought of in similar terms. They were intended as playful poetic extensions of an irrational, subjective, and collective 'joint imagination'. And it is the playful, avant-garde element of collective experimentation that seems to have so irked Bishop. Bishop is critical of the stereotypical sort of avant-garde practitioner who drains 'words of their power to denote in order to allow their powers of connotation more apparent play'.⁹⁴ Bishop's hostility towards what he believes to be purposeless avant-garde play can be ascribed to an underlying hostility to work that seems devoid of a quantifiable, utilitarian exchange value of 'success'.

Of course, there is a value of *exchange* at work in the chainpoems. But it is one that Bishop deems both inappropriate and haphazard. Bishop gets it wrong here: the chainpoems are decidedly *not* haphazard. The fact that the chainpoems choose not to follow a predetermined path does not presuppose sheer randomness. Bishop is unwilling to appreciate that spontaneous poetic growth necessitates a flexible aesthetic approach. This accounts for the lack of a completely fixed plan in the chainpoems. Additional space is always left available in the 'blueprint' of the chainpoems that allows for 'spontaneous growth'. To put it another way, a significant degree of contingency determines the chainpoem constructions. Moreover, we can trace the contingent element inherent in the chainpoems back to *Blues*. Recall that Ford chose to issue *Blues* without an accompanying literary manifesto. Ford did so in the hope that *Blues* would remain uncoded and free from modernist didacticism. The chainpoems are similar in this regard. These

⁹² Mary Ann Caws, *The Surrealist Look: An Erotics of Encounter* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1997), p.223.

⁹³ Caws, *The Surrealist Look*, p.228. Caws goes on to detail the process of exquisite corpse: 'The game involved a group of persons (generally three or more) and their successive contributions to an eventual collective figure of which the players only knew, until the final outcome, their individual part. It was usually verbal, as in the first one, which gave its name to the entire process, or visual, but occasionally it was both, with a double play back and forth. Here are the rules, if you are playing in French, as those surrealists were. The first person takes a piece of paper, writes a noun upon it, folds it so that the second person cannot see what is written; that person then writes an adjective, folds it over, and passes it to the third person, who adds a verb, and passes it on if there are more than three players. The fourth player adds a noun, folds the paper over, and the last person, assuming there are five, adds an adjective and unfolds the paper to read the sentence'. Caws, p.228.

⁹⁴ Bishop, 'Chainpoems and Surrealism', p.365.

collaborative 'chain-letters' are subject to a moment's revision. And there is no imperative to return-to-sender (à la Pound):

After writing his line, by whatever method, the poet forwards the MS to the next on the list (which has been drawn up in advance by whoever starts the chainpoem), together with the list itself, and so the chainpoem revolves to completion. Anyone may decide he has written the concluding line, in which case he makes copies of the chainpoem and sends one to each chainpoet on the list.⁹⁵

Ford's explanation refutes Bishop. There is 'method' in apparent madness. Ford is quite explicit about this. The chainpoems are not haphazard; nor are they wholly lacking in 'discipline'. A preliminary list with the names and addresses of the selected chainpoets would always be drawn up before the collaborative work began. At the same time, it is important to note the element of contingency that underpinned the entire operation. Ford makes it clear that *anyone* can decide that the poem is 'finished'. Thus the collaboration can be brought to a close at any given moment: there is no need for prior codification or consensus. The implication here is that all the chainpoem contributors are afforded the same status.⁹⁶ Ford's approach ensures that there is no single dominant, supervisory – or quasi-Poundian – voice overseeing the collaborative 'blueprint' of the chainpoems.

Let us now look at some examples of the chainpoems in action. Consider Ford and Tyler's relatively small-scale 'Duo No. 2':

The melted harp you inhaled with your ear
Grew in your wrist like a lady-limbed spear.

The broken blue eye your bed's foot wept
Returned to the phantom that parades in your coat.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Ford, 'How to Write a Chainpoem', p.369.

⁹⁶ The chainpoems also hint at Ford's later interest in traditional Japanese poetic forms like haiku. Traditionally, the Japanese renga – a poetic form determined by communally written, interlinked sequences of haiku – was characterized by its largely democratic impulse. The democratic aspect of renga finds an unexpectedly correlative in Ford's chainpoems. However, there is one significant difference between Japanese renga and Fordian chainpoems. In traditional renga there is always a so-called 'master of renga': one who directs the process of this otherwise non-hierarchical poetic procedure. In Ford's chainpoems, there are only provisional 'supervisors' and temporary time-share 'masters' of a Fordian version of avant-garde renga.

⁹⁷ Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, 'Duo No. 2', *New Directions* (1940), p.371.

These two couplets constitute the opening of the poem. 'Duo No. 2' is important as it shows how the 'rules' of the chainpoem are themselves subject to a moment's revision. Ford relates that '[a]fter the first line Duo No. 2 was written, the second poet added, and so alternately, two lines, instead of one; the last line being added by the writer of the first line'⁹⁸. As Ford writes the first line of 'Duo No. 2', it follows that the last line of the poem also belongs to him:

Haunted by rubber-necked canaries, girls
Who flag the pole on which your face is furled⁹⁹

'Duo No. 2' functions as an oscillating kind of poetic call-and-response dialogue, with either Ford or Tyler building on – or contradicting – the other's suggestion. As should be obvious, there is a line of collaborative continuity here: Ford and Tyler's chainpoem has its conceptual roots in their 'frustrated' dialogue in the long-distant *Blues*. However, whilst their earlier *Blues* dialogue was conducted poem-by-poem, their chainpoem equivalent is even more compressed. It is a more intimate type of dialogue, literally taking place in smaller units of poetic space. It rumbles along under the empty space separating the couplets, as well as in the lines of the poem. Occurring more or less in the middle of the poem, one such moment of intimate movement stands out. Following on from Tyler's invocation 'Of the mouth-made future where you, falling, fed', Ford continues:

How you drink the drowned dream of Not
That makes your heart run backwards like a clock.

When your arms are open, a big toe in each hand,
The past slaps you when you dare to stand.¹⁰⁰

Having drunk down Tyler's 'drowned dream of Not',¹⁰¹ Ford picks up the poetic thread. Acutely aware of the stanza divide separating his two-line response, Ford rises to the aesthetic challenge. Ford's 'arms are open' – attempting, as it were, to reach across, bridge the divide, and encourage what he starts in *Blues*: a subtle approach that seeks to ensure

⁹⁸ See 'Key to Chainpoems', p.378.

⁹⁹ Ford and Tyler, 'Duo No. 2', p.372. I would suggest this is as close as Ford comes to asserting a Poundian sort of 'control' over 'his' circular creations.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p.372.

¹⁰¹ Ford is perhaps alluding to Tyler's aforementioned 'Anti-Poem' (1934).

non-hierarchical poetic exchange. This declaration of openness can be opposed to the suppression that occurs as 'The past slaps you when you dare to stand'. This line evokes a high modernist 'past' slapping the face of its insouciant children as they 'dare to stand'. But 'stand' they continue to do. This chainpoem 'runs' counter-clockwise to Pound's famous modernist imperatives of 1912:

1. Direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.¹⁰²

We get the sense that Ford and Tyler are being deliberately provocative in 'Duo No.2'. There is an almost gleeful delight in Ford and Tyler's resolute decision to cling to a deliberately awkward semblance of rhythmic poetic form 'in sequence of a metronome'.¹⁰³ Much as Ford and Tyler sought to break away from Pound's advice regarding poets and his commands about the rules of circulation, here they respond to paternalistic 'slaps' by parodically distancing themselves from their elder's poetic dictates.

Moving on, we can see that whilst the line-by-line dialogues that comprise the chainpoems are fairly compressed, the networks of communicative exchange are ever more expansive. Consider 'International Sonnet No.1'. Serving as American representative to the late 1930s *London Bulletin* – edited by E.L.T. Mesens and Roland Penrose – Ford had previously established links with the British poets of the 'New Apocalypse'. These poets contributed to 'International Sonnet No.1'. Led by Henry Treece and J.F. Hendry, the New Apocalypse movement is usually described as poetic manifestation of Neo-Romanticism. In Treece's words, the New Apocalypse aimed 'to collect and display [various] international examples of a new Romantic tendency, whose most obvious elements are love, death, an adherence to myth and an awareness of war'.¹⁰⁴ The involvement of such sympathetic British writers in the chainpoem projects would have obviously appealed to Ford (who had intimate links with the neo-Romantic painter Pavel Tchelitchew). 'International Sonnet No. 1' captures what Ford outlines in his introduction to the chainpoems:

¹⁰² Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays*, p.3.

¹⁰³ The rhythmic beating of a clock-like heart also emphasizes the metronomic quality of 'Duo No. 2'.

¹⁰⁴ Henry Treece, *The Crown and Sickle: An Anthology* (London: P.S. King & Staples Limited, 1943), p.5.

There are these hungers the course beak brings
 amputating the public ghosts of public poets
 as they pound the gavel and say: Watch how I sing;
 in the milky night I swing you in a cradle of bone!
 With fumbled lava and ransacked moon
 on your unskinned baby-skin the lullabye wind tatoos [sic]¹⁰⁵

Having reached the end of the first line of the sonnet, logically one anticipates the second will open with an alliterative repetition – ‘back’ seems likely – to carry over the rhythmic movement generated just as the bringing ‘beak’ paradoxically signifies the line’s abrupt termination. Not so, however. If not an outright ‘contradiction’, the amputation that greets the reader in the opening of the sonnet’s second line does denote a shift of sorts. Shifting from the bleak depiction of natural desolation and starvation, the poem’s second line shifts register into something altogether more literary. Changing direction again, the third line of the poem carries forward – rather than refutes – the ghostly specters of the second’s unspecified ‘public poets’. The pounding of the ‘gavel’ suggests this, as it carries with it connotations of public gestures of courtroom procedure and spectacle.

The semi-colon that punctuates the close of the third line does not act as a thematic connective, although a lingering sense of that line is carried forward into the fourth, evinced by the gesture of ‘swinging’. The fourth and fifth lines of ‘International Sonnet No. 1’ were written by New Apocalypse writers (Norman McCaig and Dorian Cooke, respectively), and it is perhaps unsurprising that, given their shared thematic sensibilities, the poem shifts yet again into more recognizable neo-Romantic tropes, evocative both of death (‘cradle of bone’) and destruction (‘lava’). Correspondingly, the reader encounters the somewhat trite – but nevertheless momentum-carrying – conversion of ‘milky night’ into ‘fumbled lava’. The sixth line of ‘International Sonnet No. 1’ is Ford’s, and it falls to him to bring order – or potentially, contradictory *disorder* – to the chainpoem. Somewhat uncharacteristically, Ford plumps for order over chaos. And he acquits himself of his chosen task fairly well. The ‘unskinned’ depiction of the unnamed infant corresponds with

¹⁰⁵ Charles Henri Ford, ‘International Sonnet No. 1’ [undated: c.1940], Charles Henri Ford Papers, HRC. ‘International Sonnet No. 1’ in order of appearance (and location): 1. Harvey Breit (NYC), 2. Harry Roskolenko (NYC), 3. Robert Friend (NYC), 4. Norman McCaig (Edinburgh), 5. Dorian Cooke (Lincolnshire), 6. Charles Henri Ford (Norwalk, Connecticut).

the act of 'amputation' inaugurating the second line of the sonnet.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, not only does Ford's wind-beaten tattoo of a 'lullabye' relate back to the nocturnal song spread over lines three and four, it also suggests the sort of emotional nourishment meted out to dependent children lying in 'cradles'. In turn, Ford's evocation of childhood's ritualized nighttime song relates back to the poem's opening line, where – if not for the unavoidable sense of truncation presupposed by the switch from poet to poet – the 'beak' might well be in the process of bringing 'back' something to stave off physical hunger. In this regard, the 'International Sonnet No. 1' chainpoem does indeed 'revolve to completion'.

Whilst 'International Sonnet No.1' reads as a more or less finished text, it is by no means representative of the 'complete' chainpoem circuit. To get a sense of the complete depth and breadth of the chainpoem network, we need to look at the eponymous 'International Chainpoem':

When a parasol is cooled in the crystal garden,
one spire radiates and the other turns round;
a toad, the Unwanted, counts the ribs' teardrops
while I mark each idol in its dregs.
There is a shredded voice, there are three fingers
that follow to the end a dancing gesture
and pose a legend under the turning shade
where the girl's waterfall drops its piece.
Then balls of ennui burst one by one,
by and by metallic metres escape from ceramic pipes.
Oh sun, glass of cloud, adrift in the vast sky,
spell me out a sonnet of a steel necklace.¹⁰⁷

The theme of circularity is foregrounded in this chainpoem as 'one spire radiates and the other turns round' under the similarly 'turning shade'. To be sure, the 'International Chainpoem' follows the same pattern of sudden inversion and incongruous juxtaposition displayed in many of the other collaborations. Equally, the 'International Chainpoem' features a great deal of characteristic transmutation: 'teardrops' seemingly cascade from a 'girl's waterfall' before turning into 'balls of ennui' that 'burst one by one'. Likewise, a

¹⁰⁶ Traces of Lautréamont's famous formulation concerning 'the chance juxtaposition of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table' might even be discerned via the 'amputation' in 'International Sonnet No. 1'. Comte de Lautréamont, *Maldoror and Poems* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), p.217.

¹⁰⁷ Charles Henri Ford, 'International Chainpoem', *New Directions* (1940), p.370.

clearly discernible process of alchemical transmogrification can be charted: 'the crystal garden' gives way to an image of 'metallic metres' leaking from 'ceramic pipes'. Ceramic piping soon cedes to a 'glass of cloud, adrift in the vast sky', prior to spelling 'a sonnet of a steel necklace'.

However, underlying issues of composition are arguably more important than those concerning content in this 'International Chainpoem'. What we have here is a prime example of Ford's desire to branch out and establish increasingly expansive networks of poetic communication. Two of the lines belong to the British New Apocalypse: Dorian Cooke and Norman McCaig. Four belong to Americans: (the expatriate) Ford, Tyler, Gordon Sylander, and George Marion O'Donnell. The remaining six lines belong to the Japanese 'VOU': Takesi Fuji, Katue Kitasono, Saburoh Kuroda, Nagao Hirao, Syuiti Nagayasu, and Tuneo Osada.¹⁰⁸ The VOU were a loosely aligned group of Tokyo-based writers, led by the Japanese Surrealist Kitasono.¹⁰⁹ The presence of the VOU is indicative of a shift away from the dualistic routes of Anglo-American poetic exchange previously favored by Ford. Ford sought out communication with the VOU poets in order to provide the chainpoems with the truly trans-national aspect of sociable poetic exchange that he craved, signing his letters off with the phrase: 'I send this intellivision [sic] to Tokio with the compliments of Paris'.¹¹⁰

Looking at the 'International Chainpoem', we can see that Ford offered much more than just his compliments. VOU contributions bookend the 'International Chainpoem': the first two lines of the poem belong to Fuji and Kitasono; the final four were written by Kuroda, Hirao, Nagayasu, and Osada. Recall Pound's early advice to Ford. According to Pound, one must, at all times, maintain complete control over the chain-letters that one chooses to distribute. Ford went against Pound's advice in the 'International Chainpoem'. Ford willingly relinquished control over to the VOU. And with it went respective Poundian and Zukofskian concerns about editorial control and poetic autonomy. In choosing to hand

¹⁰⁸ 'International Chainpoem' in order of appearance: 1. Takesi Fuji, 2. Katue Kitasono, 3. Charles Henri Ford, 4. Dorian Cooke, 5. Norman McCaig, 6. Gordon Sylander, 7. George Marion O' Donnell, 8. Parker Tyler, 9. Saburoh Kuroda, 10. Nagao Hirao, 11. Syuiti Nagayasu, 12. Tuneo Osada.

¹⁰⁹ Pound was an early champion of the VOU group: 'They see the crystal set, the chemical laboratory and the pine tree with untrammelled clearness... I know that nowhere in Europe is there any such vortex of poetic alertness. Tokio takes over, where Paris stopped'. Ezra Pound, 'Vou Club', *Townsmen* (January 1938), p.4.

¹¹⁰ Charles Henri Ford, 'Paris Letter For Vou' [undated]. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box, 4, Folder 6.

his invention over to a group of relative strangers in Japan, Ford signaled his willingness to become one poetic voice among many others: drawn together from Tokyo (the VOU), Paris (Ford), London (Cooke), Edinburgh (McCaig), Madison (Sylander), Belzoni (O'Donnell), and New York (Tyler).

Chainpoems, Intimate Bureaucracies, and the Emergence of Mail Art:

With each subsequent delivery of the chainpoem, modernist autonomy receded one step further in Ford's work. In its place came something more akin to a proto-postmodernism. However, fully to appreciate the postmodern potentiality of the chainpoems, we need first to consider the implications of Ford's chosen method of poetic delivery and dissemination: the international postal network. Bernhard Siegert's study of literature as the epoch of the postal system provides a useful context with which to appreciate the anticipatory, postmodern qualities of Ford's chainpoems. Siegert offers a philosophically informed reading of literary development in relation to the historical construction and standardization of the postal network. According to Siegert, the unregulated postal systems of ancient and classical societies 'equated transmission channels with language, language with communication, communication with understanding, and understanding with the salvation of humanity... The world was the legacy of sites of transmission, of halts, relays, [and] switches'.¹¹¹ Later, in response to the political, spiritual, and aesthetic upheaval of the Renaissance, '[t]he truth of knowledge thus demanded a postal hygiene that ushered the philosophers of language into office and prestige'.¹¹² Siegert argues that the epoch of postal prestige culminates with the age of Goethe, where '[i]n a system that posted The Author, all letters unerringly arrived at a universal address: the Inner Person'.¹¹³ In other words, Siegert equates the epoch of epistolary exchange with the construction of subjective (literary) identity.

Siegert argues that all this came to an end on 6 May 1840. This was the date of the introduction of the 'penny post' in Great Britain. Previously, on 29 July 1839, the 'Penny Post Bill' had been passed in the House of Commons. This bill signaled the regulation of

¹¹¹ Bernhard Siegert. *Relays: Literature as an Epoch of the Postal System* (Stanford: California UP, 1999), p.1.

¹¹² Siegert, *Relays*, p.1.

¹¹³ Ibid. p.68.

postal exchange. 'After 6 May 1840, a sending meant finding a home in the postal system itself. Thus, the postal system closed itself as a system, and so came to end an epoch of written communication'¹¹⁴ based around the idea of inter-subjective exchange.¹¹⁵ The regulation of the post had far-reaching results: '[s]ignifiers no longer followed the rationality of meaning and its comprehension, but instead the rationality of a medium that subjected them to a standard that always preceded the possibility of meaning (as the standard value of meaning)'.¹¹⁶ Standardization meant that

[l]etters ceased to be the classical medium for the production and recording of subjectivity and its development because the interpretation of obscure meanings no longer was decisive proof of identity (as identity in change). Such proof was provided instead by the postal materiality of identity: its character as an interval.¹¹⁷

Postal standardization thus came to preclude the possible 'interpretation of individuality [that] had been the grounds for all written communication'.¹¹⁸ Seigert goes on to detail how the standardization of the postal system soon went global:

The invention of the postage stamp already implied its export across the borders of the land and the empire of Great Britain. What eliminated borders as far as the postal system was concerned, or at least made them anachronistic, could not very well be confined within such boundaries itself.¹¹⁹

Whilst it eliminated geographical borders, the introduction of the postage stamp also came with decidedly negative connotations. Seigert recounts how the British government hoped that the '[t]ransatlantic and transpacific penny postage would create a homeland of global

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p.108.

¹¹⁵ Niklas Luhmann's account of 'art as social system' corroborates the analysis of Seigert. Like Seigert, Luhmann argues that shift in the operations underpinning communicative exchange occurs in the mid-19th century: 'At least since romanticism, one no longer seems to trust the purifying power of communication, because communication permits no access to the other's interiority, no possibility of intermingling his or her operations with one's own', Niklas Luhmann, *Art as a Social System* (Stanford: California UP, 2000), p.12. Luhmann's assertions about the historical impossibility of interpersonal 'intermingling' should be kept in mind over the next few pages.

¹¹⁶ Seigert, *Relays*, p.109.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. p.118.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. pp.116-17.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p.128.

dimensions, thus making homesickness impossible once and for all. As the plan was realized, however, its pure-hearted benevolence increasingly revealed the distinctive features of imperialism'.¹²⁰ Ford's chainpoems arose out of this historically-regulated network of international postal exchange. Knowing this, we are better able to appreciate the nuances of the chainpoem project. Ford wanted to use rationalized routes of standardized postal exchange as a means to create something approaching a subjective, trans-national and collective poetic sensibility.¹²¹ That is to say, Ford sought to subvert a heavily regulated international postal network of material 'exchange' in which inter-subjective communication had been declared ideologically undesirable and deemed even impossible.

It is the subversive aspect of Ford's attempt at postal appropriation that gives his collaborative and communicative chainpoems an anticipatory postmodern quality. In his discussion of post-1945 'networked' art, Craig J. Saper argues for the emergence of what he terms *intimate bureaucracies*:

An intimate bureaucracy makes poetic use of the trappings of large bureaucratic systems and procedures (e.g., logos, stamps) to create intimate aesthetic situations, including the pleasures of sharing a special knowledge or a new language among a small network of participants.¹²²

Ford's chainpoems – those created 'among a small network of participants' that make 'poetic use of the trappings of large bureaucratic systems and procedures' – pre-empt Saper's theorization of intimate bureaucracies: especially in their construction of new linguistic understanding amongst small networks of participants, seemingly disparate groupings scattered over large geographical distances. For Saper, intimate bureaucracies hinge upon both individual and communal activity: '[t]hese almost opposed values of collective action and self-promotion combine to form an alternative to more hierarchical systems of appraising artworks'.¹²³ This is what we get in the chainpoems: individual

¹²⁰ Ibid. p.141.

¹²¹ Chainpoems like 'Lyric by Nine' dramatize the shift from an individual sensibility to a collective poetic subjectivity. Whilst the first six lines of this chainpoem lyric describe the perspective of an individual poetic subject, the final three capture a move into the collective: 'Now let *us* change the dawn into a subject for crime'. Charles Henri Ford, 'Lyric by Nine', *New Directions* (1940), p.370. Emphasis added.

¹²² Craig J. Saper, *Networked Art* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2001), p.xii.

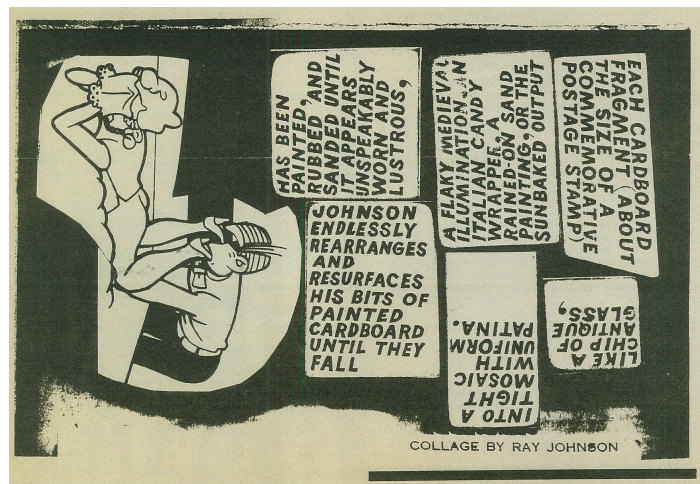
¹²³ Saper, *Networked Art*, p.xii.

architects and supervisors adding to a collaborative piece of work that unsettles (modernist) assumptions about poetic autonomy.

It is also what we get in the work in one of Ford's later associates: Ray Johnson. Ford and Johnson were correspondents during the 1960s. Johnson also featured in the 1989 *Unmuzzled OX Blues* (figure 1). According to Saper, Johnson

initiated a practice called "on-sending" which involved sending an incomplete or unfinished artwork to another artist, critic, or even a stranger, who, in turn, helped to complete the work by making some additions and then sending it on to another participant in the network.¹²⁴

Saper recounts that '[t]hese gift exchanges, begun in 1955, evolved into more elaborate networks of hundreds of participants, but at first they included a relatively small circle of participants'.¹²⁵ It seems impossible to ignore the points of comparisons between Ford's postal practice and the historically later one developed by Johnson.¹²⁶



(Figure 1)

At the very least, we can say with some confidence that Ford's chainpoems anticipate certain aspects of Johnson's mail art.

Both Ford's chainpoems and Johnson's mail art have shared avant-garde heritage.¹²⁷ Similarly, both attempt to draw old and new friends together through the

¹²⁴ Ibid. p.31.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Fittingly, given the role that issues of modernist 'circulars' have played in the current discussion, Johnson once sent Ford a collection of mail-art sealed in an envelope bearing a seal stating 'Ezra Pound for President!' Ray Johnson to Charles Henri Ford [undated]. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 14, Folder 2.

¹²⁷ Whereas Ford's chainpoems develop avant-garde strategies like the collaborative 'exquisite corpse', Johnson's mail art collages arguably represents an 'impossible' culmination of such avant-garde praxis: 'Mail art... not only attempts to sanction the free reception of gifts of art without obligation (in a sense to restore the symbolical division between gift and exchange in an increasingly commodity-orientated society). More importantly, it accords to *each and every one without exception* the power of a giver who

otherwise instrumentalized routes of postal exchange in order to create alternative and intimate networks of inter-subjective communication. Indeed, as William S. Wilson notes, Johnson's collagist practice 'was most useful to him as a means of thinking about friends. He made art so that his collages were, as works of art, one of the variables in friendship'.¹²⁸ Wilson goes on to detail Johnson's demotic aesthetic:

His art was a friendly endeavor, like philosophy among Greeks in Plato's dialogues, so that there was no art which was not an activity among friends. From a few such axioms many theorems follow: that art was not for profit or fame, nor even for disinterested contemplation in a purposeful purposelessness. Ultimately the most satisfying art for him was the art of friendship. *Loving movement, he used art to set a set of friends in motion.*¹²⁹

Wilson's positive description of Johnson's love of 'motion' and the desire to use art 'to set a set of friends in motions' chimes with Ford's role as a 'catalyst among poets'.¹³⁰

However, in spite of these personal and aesthetic similarities, there is one major difference between the respective postal practices of Ford and Johnson. Whereas Ford's chainpoems work to preliminary, yet predetermined list of potential contributors, Johnson's collagist mail art is utterly contingent:

An item in one of Ray's envelopes could refer to something within the same mailing, or might also refer away from the piece of mail to a prior mailing. The chain of references was not closed, but was open to combining with other images linked in reciprocating references.¹³¹

gives the most and thus obligates the others – a social impossibility if there ever was one and perhaps the purest expression of the many avant-garde dreams of an existence beyond social division (from Dadaist to Surrealist notions of collective creation and the politics of the subconscious, to Joseph Beuys's dictum *Jedermann ist Künstler*). Ina Blom, 'How to (Not) Answer a Letter: Ray Johnson's Postal Performance', *Ray Johnson: Please Add To & Return* (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2009), p.103.

¹²⁸ William S. Wilson, *With Ray: The Art of Friendship* (Black Mountain, North Carolina: Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, 1997), p.12.

¹²⁹ Wilson, *With Ray: The Art of Friendship*, p.12. Emphasis added.

¹³⁰ Equally, it is important to consider the role that self-interest played in Johnson's otherwise demotic approach. Critics have noted how 'Johnson admitted that the network served his own interests, maintaining himself at the centre of a social world that was the material for his art'. Alex Sainsbury, 'Ray Johnson: Please Add To & Return', *Ray Johnson: Please Add To & Return* (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2009), p.95. Johnson's self-interest is not far removed from Ford's aforementioned desire for defensive situatedness. To put it another way, it seems that Johnson and Ford both liked to be situated at the center of attention. (Nb. the phrase 'catalyst among poets' is the title of Asako Kitaori's interview with Ford).

¹³¹ Ibid. p.20.

What we see in Johnson's postal practice is the beginning of what can be described as postmodern proliferation. Johnson's mail art collages posed a challenge to the 'grid' (i.e. canvas) of modernist painting:

He also opened modernist painterly strategies to new determinations, subsuming them in a social practice that blurred the very distinction between 'social' and 'formal' strategies in the arts: in this way he made it possible to think sociality itself outside the field of representation. Johnson's postal performance is then not just an artistic action taking place *in* the social field, but, more precisely, a work on the performativity of the social itself.¹³²

Despite their contingent and 'spontaneous' characteristics, Ford's patterned chainpoem 'blueprints' can only hint at the direction of Johnson's radically performative – and potentially unending – postal practices. But the point to be made is that they certainly do anticipate some of postal routes that Johnson's later intimate bureaucracies take. And, as we will now see, the same is also true of Ford's long-standing interest in the performative aspect of epistolary sociality.

A Sociable Sort of Concluding Circular Coda: Charles Henri Ford and the Scandalous Postcard:

Pierre Bourdieu stresses the important role that sociality plays when one attempts to gain access to social capital. Bourdieu reasons that capital is a product of social relations, 'an energy which only exists and produces its effects in the field in which it is produced and reproduced, each of the properties attached to class is given its value and efficacy by the specific laws of each field'.¹³³ Having outlined the relational aspect of the 'energy' produced by capital, Bourdieu asserts that 'the social rank and specific power which agents are assigned in a particular field depend firstly on the specific capital they can mobilize, whatever their additional wealth in other types of capital'.¹³⁴ In order to mobilize social

¹³² Ina Blom, 'How to (Not) Answer a Letter: Ray Johnson's Postal Performance', p.111.

¹³³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), p.113.

¹³⁴ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p.113.

capital, one needs to be particularly adept at negotiating their way through the realm of social relations. The ability to negotiate is important because it is based on the recognition that '[i]ndividuals do not move about in social space in a random way'.¹³⁵ This is because they are subject to external forces that structure the social field and 'because they resist the forces of the field with their specific inertia, that is, their properties, which may exist in embodied form, as dispositions, or in objectified form, in goods, qualifications etc'.¹³⁶ Bourdieu goes on to detail the possible factors that can determine one's ability to move through the ordered structures of social space:

To a given volume of inherited capital there corresponds a band of more or less equally probable trajectories leading to more or less equivalent positions (this is the *field of the possibles* objectively offered to a given agent), and the shift from one trajectory to another often depends on collective events—wars, crisis etc.—or individual events—encounters, affairs, benefactors etc.—which are usually described as (fortunate or unfortunate) accidents, although they themselves depend statistically on the position and the disposition of those whom they befall (e.g., the skill in operating 'connections' which enables the holders of high social capital to preserve or increase this capital), when, that is, they are not deliberately contrived by institutions (clubs, family reunions, old-boys' or alumni associations etc.) or by the 'spontaneous' intervention of individuals or groups.¹³⁷

Bourdieu's analysis goes to the heart of the matter: one's possible trajectory within the social field is determined in large part by individual 'position' and personal 'disposition'. That is, one's position in the field of social relations depends on the individual's ability – or disposition – to make and maintain 'connections' and networks of association. The ability to adeptly operate (or skillfully manipulate) their social connections 'enables the holders of high social capital to preserve or increase this capital'.

We know that Ford wanted his share of social capital. Hence his desire to construct and maintain circular networks of social and aesthetic association through the medium of epistolary exchange. The circular poetic route outlined in this chapter provided Ford with a means to readily mobilize accumulated capital and thus ensure his negotiation through the crowded social field. What is more, recognition of this fact brings the current

¹³⁵ Ibid. p.110.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

conversation full-circle. If we look again at his formative postal exchanges with Pound, we can see that Ford's first postcards were an early attempt to mobilize some social (and cultural) capital. Ford's pre-*Bluesian* interaction with Pound represented an attempt to force his way into the 'alumni association' (Bourdieu) of literary modernism. We have established that such an attempt was largely unsuccessful. Ford's dealings with Pound were characterized by frustration. Ford quickly realized the need to differentiate his poetic and editorial outlook from Pound. As we saw earlier in this chapter, the contentious issues surrounding the exchange of literary circulars in *Blues* was an early example of Ford's desire to turn away from Pound. As we also saw, Ford's chainpoems represented another attempt to move away from the Poundian strictures of poetic autonomy and absolute editorial control. As we will now see, the same is equally true of Ford's postcard exhibition of 1976.

In 1976, Ford exhibited 108 postcards at the Iolas Gallery, New York City. The names of those senders selected by Ford to feature in the exhibition reads as a distinguished avant-garde parade. Amongst others, the exhibition included postcards from Djuna Barnes, Gertrude Stein, Salvador Dali, Man Ray, H.D., and Henri-Cartier Bresson.¹³⁸ On the one hand, Ford's postcard exhibition represented the culmination of a process of epistolary sociability that stretched back some forty-nine years. On the other, it can be read as a final refutation of Pound. Whereas Pound wanted to keep the processes of circular exchange private, Ford sought to make them ever more sociable and *public*.

Seigert details the profound consequences that the introduction of the postcard had on the already vexed notion of intimate inter-subjective exchange in the aftermath of the postal epoch. Whereas a closed (i.e. sealed) envelope traditionally presupposed notions of intimacy, the visible form of the 'postcard was scandalous because on behalf of the economy of information it rejected an intimate mode of speech that had been capable of teasing true confessions from the soul. Among other things, after all, truth was also the result of the limitations on access to the discourse'.¹³⁹ Ford delights in tearing open the envelope of intimacy and exposing the mechanisms and machinations of hitherto private expressions of modernist sociality. In this respect, Ford's use of the postcard is

¹³⁸ Ford's selection process was wholly considered, necessitating the omission of numerous postcards sent by other writers. As recounted to the author, Lynne Tillman was one such writer who fell short the standards imposed by Ford.

¹³⁹ Siegert, *Relays*, p.148.

scandalous: he is parodically highlighting the role that Bourdieu's conception of sociability plays in the circulation of modernist capital. At the same time, Ford's postcard exhibition also signifies a decisive shift away from the exclusionary 'discourses' and attitudes of the privacy-minded Pound. Where Pound sought to place 'limitations' on the accessibility of the 'discourse' of literary modernism (via the exchange of *private* chain-letters), a very different sort of outlook emerges in Ford's increasingly *public* and performative brand of circular poetics. Ford is not interested in being an autonomous arbiter of aesthetic taste in the conventional sense. As his scandalously hung postcards suggest, he is more interested in revealing the taste-making and reputation-making mechanisms of circular exchange as a kind of art in and of itself. Ford is brazenly suggesting that it is who you're in correspondence with (i.e. who's sending you postcards and who's performing in your chainpoem experiments) that determines your allotted fifteen minutes of poetic fame. In other words, Ford is suggesting that poetic expression can be a product of personality and sociality. Much as Ford said of his friend Andy Warhol: 'You are what you eat'.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in John Wilcock, *The Autography and Sex Life of Andy Warhol* (New York: Trela Media LLC, 2010), p.61. We will discuss Ford's relationship with Warhol in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Be Careful What You Wish For: Caught Between Pop and a Historical Hard Place

NO
ONE
EVER
NOTICES
groggy butterflies beneath the snow¹

This chapter considers Charles Henri Ford's occasionally fraught poetic and aesthetic responses to the emergence and apparent ubiquity of the arch practitioner of 1960s Pop: Andy Warhol. As will become evident, Ford's dealings with Warhol reveal his acute – and anxious – awareness of shifting trends in contemporary American aesthetic production. Ford does not blindly adhere to the aesthetic markers laid down by trendsetters like Warhol. Indeed, one of the merits of Ford's vibrant and varied output is how it adds a modernist sheen to the postmodernism propagated by Warhol. In this respect, Ford's considered responses to Pop Art also serve to refute the charge of aesthetic dilettantism leveled at him by Michael Kimmelman. Ford does not copy: he scrutinizes and responds accordingly. In short, a thorough reassessment of Ford's aesthetic prescience, insight, and continued critical worth is our focus here.

The first section of this chapter returns to Ford's late haiku and his final *Blues*. Produced decades after the primary phase of Pop had petered out, these late poetic and editorial projects are important as they reveal the depth – and complexity – of the lasting impression that Warhol made on Ford.² In this section, we will outline Warhol's anxiety-inducing appearances in Ford's late haiku and the *Unmuzzled OX Blues*. Having done so, we will consider how Ford might be viewed as a poetic precursor to Warhol. We then step into the 1960s. In this section, having discussed Ford's initial visual responses to Pop, we will debate the critical significance of Ford's *Spare Parts* (1966). Here, we will consider how *Spare Parts* acts both as a critical poetic document and as a self-reflexive account of Ford's status in the contemporary cultural sphere. Finally, we will turn to Ford's other major poetic work of the 1960s: *Silver Flower Coo* (1968). This section charts Ford's

¹ Charles Henri Ford, *Spare Parts* (Athens, Greece: A New View Book, 1966), unpaginated.

² Warhol was not the only prominent Pop artist who made a lasting impression on Ford. Gerard Malanga has noted that Ford was also impressed with and influenced by the work of James Rosenquist and Claes Oldenburg. Gerard Malanga, telephone interview with the author, 3 September 2010. However, constraints of time and space preclude any discussion of Ford's engagement with the work of Rosenquist and Oldenburg in this chapter.

increasing ambivalence to the culturally prominent Pop alongside his growing awareness that he does not fit easily into contemporary aesthetic circles or categories. Ending with a brief discussion of Ford's perpetual aesthetic awkwardness, this final section paves the way for the concerns of the next chapter.

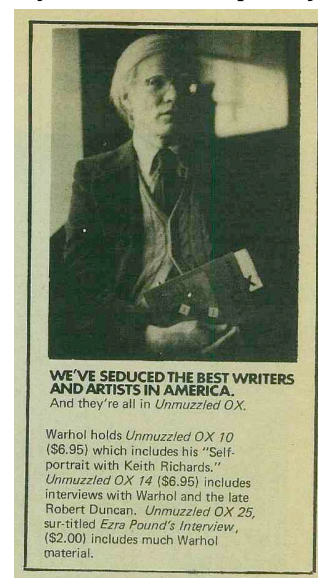
Accounting for the Skull-Silver Dust on the Mirrors of Ford's Late Poetic and Editorial Projects:

In an earlier chapter, we postulated that the ghost of Ezra Pound haunted the late poetic and editorial projects of Charles Henri Ford. When we looked closely at Ford's late poetry, we found numerous allusions to Pound's final collection of cantos: *Drafts & Fragments*. The same was also true of Ford's *Unmuzzled OX Blues*. Much as it did Ford's late haiku, we saw how the anxiety-inducing ghost of Pound haunted the *Unmuzzled OX Blues*. Whilst the previous analysis still stands, I want now to suggest that more than one ghostly presence is felt in Ford's late poetic and editorial ventures. More specifically, I want to suggest that the shade of Andy Warhol sits alongside the ghost of Ezra Pound in the late poetry and editorial projects of Ford. For instance, consider Warhol's suitably spectral,

sepia-infused appearance in the *Unmuzzled OX Blues* (figure 1).

Warhol's anemic complexion, and his shock of white hair, lends a ghostly air to the *Unmuzzled OX Blues*. However, it is in Ford's late poetry that the spectral presence of Warhol is strongest. Consider the following lines from *Om Krishna II*:

But love lasts longer than fame for many another
Whatever the waves are saying will be cradled by
the wind
Leaving skull-silver mirrors to keep you wondering³



(Figure 1)

³ Charles Henri Ford, *Om Krishna II: from the Sickroom of the Walking Eagles* (New York: Cherry Valley Press, 1981), unpaginated.

Earlier, we suggested that these lines contain numerous allusions to Pound's *Drafts & Fragments*. Looking at them afresh, we can see that these lines from *Om Krishna II* also allude to Warhol.⁴ For instance, we have Ford's thinly veiled allusion to Warhol's pithy assertion about fifteen minutes of fame. Ford's preoccupation with 'skull-silver mirrors' also relates to Warhol. Silver was the color that came to be associated with Warhol's first 'Factory' studio (located at 231 East Forty-seventh Street in Manhattan)⁵. This is not all. Ford's allusion also recalls Warhol's 'Self-Portrait with Skull' (1977). In this deathly image (figure 2), we certainly find an apt visual correlative to Ford's evocation of Warholian silver skulls.



(Figure 2)

But what of the 'mirrors' that supposedly keep us 'wondering'? Previously, we considered Ford's many references to mirrors in relation to the late Pound. In the late *Drafts & Fragments*, we found Pound contemplating whether he was willing to lose himself in 'Some hall of mirrors' (CXIV: 807). Ford echoes Pound:

In the maze of the
Mirror of the Unknown, turning
Keeps us turning⁶

'Mirrors without / Mirrors' mutters Ford: 'They won't go any / Further than you take them'.⁷ This thematic preoccupation with the impasse caused by perpetually reflecting mazes of mirrors aligns Ford's concerns with those of the late Pound. But we must be careful here not to overemphasize the presence of Pound at the expense of Warhol.⁸ Consider the following haiku in Ford's *Emblems of Arachne*:

⁴ Traces of Warhol persist in *Om Krishna I: Special Effects* (1979). Ford's oblique elegy to the Warholian 'Superstar' Candy Darling is included at the end of *Special Effects*.

⁵ Silver being the color of Warhol's trademark hairpiece.

⁶ Charles Henri Ford, *Emblems of Arachne* (New York: Catchword Papers, 1986), p.16.

⁷ Ford, *Emblems of Arachne*, p.11.

⁸ Consider Annette Michelson's description of Warhol's first Factory. Michelson details how the tin-foiled covered walls of 231 East Forty-seventh Street bestowed, 'as gold would not, the minimal reflective potential upon surfaces which could transform the Factory into a dim hall of mirrors, redoubling in its confusion of actor and audience the narcissistic dynamic of the site's theatrical economy', Annette Michelson, "'Where Is Your Rupture?'" Mass Culture and the Gesamtkunstwerk', *Andy*

Not locking onto
 Guide-stars of controlled flywheels.
 Dust on the mirror⁹

If we look closely, allusions to Warhol – with the ‘guiding’ hand of the ‘stargazer’ – are up for grabs in this late haiku.¹⁰ So too are veiled allusions to the mirror-like surfaces of famous works like Warhol’s ‘Diamond Dust Shoes’ (1980). Fredric Jameson famously contrasts Vincent Van Gogh’s ‘Pair of Boots’ (1887) and Warhol’s ‘Diamond Dust Shoes’ (1980) when discussing the differences between the modern and postmodern eras. Jameson reasons that ‘[t]he first and most evident’ characteristic of the latter era ‘is the emergence of a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense, perhaps the supreme formal feature of all the postmodernisms’.¹¹ For Jameson, the superficially flat, depthless, and mirror-like quality of Warhol’s images epitomize the postmodern drift of contemporary art. In other words, Jameson is asserting that Warholian Pop is concerned with the surface of things and nothing more.¹²

The postmodern focus on surface detail can be opposed to, say, the older (i.e. modernist) epistemological and hermeneutic ‘depth models’ proposed by Jameson. According to Jameson, Pop practitioners like Warhol are implicated in ‘the mission of criticizing and discrediting this very hermeneutic model of the inside and outside and of stigmatizing such models as ideological and metaphysical’.¹³ However, Jameson’s reading of Warhol is inadequate. Jameson quickly glosses over the issue of the deeply ingrained materiality of Warhol’s ‘Diamond Dust Shoes’ (figure 3):

Warhol, (ed.) Annette Michelson (Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002), p.101. Though it is unlikely that Michelson had Pound in mind, this description of the Factory’s ‘hall of mirrors’ recalls his exact words in *Drafts & Fragments*. Thus, this perhaps unintentional correlative highlights the multifaceted allusion at play in Ford’s late haiku, reinforcing and encouraging a multiplicity of readings.

⁹ Ford, *Emblems of Arachne*, p.16.

¹⁰ There is a third potential intertextual allusion at work in this particular haiku. Ford’s depiction of ‘Dust on the mirror’ also refers back to the March 1945 issue of *View*. Man Ray’s photograph of Marcel Duchamp’s dust-covered ‘Large Glass’ featured in this issue of Ford’s second periodical. The text of Ford’s poem ‘The Flag of Ecstasy’ was superimposed over Man Ray’s photograph.

¹¹ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 1991), p.9.

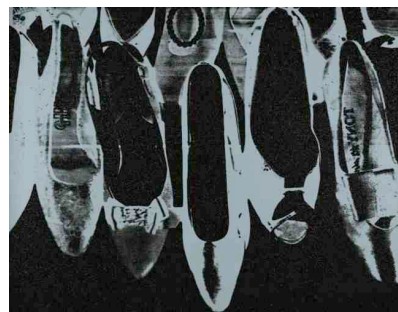
¹² Warhol appears to confirm Jameson’s assertion when he flatly states that ‘Pop comes from the outside’, Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), p.20.

¹³ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p.12.

Indeed, there is a kind of return of the repressed in *Diamond Dust Shoes*, a strange, compensatory, decorative exhilaration, explicitly designated by the title itself, which is, of course, the glitter of gold dust, the spangling of gilt sand that seals the surface of the painting and yet continues to glint at us.¹⁴

It should be noted that the sprinkling of dust on the surface of Warhol's canvas does not imply a 'sealed' resistance to any subsequent sort of critical interpretation.¹⁵ Rather, the application of dust foregrounds traces of the material processes of artistic production (that is, the dust would have been applied by hand, rather than simply reproduced ad nauseam by silk-screening). Jameson is wrong in his belief that the 'Diamond Dust Shoes' offer only a 'compensatory, decorative exhilaration'.¹⁶ Jameson is either unable or unwilling to appreciate that Warhol's decision to apply dust to his canvases is part of an arch commentary on the notion of the 'auratic' in the age of mass reproduction.

Walter Benjamin famously suggests that the 'aura' attached to the work of art withers in the age of mechanical reproduction. According to Benjamin, '[t]his is a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art. One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition'.¹⁷ For Benjamin, '[t]he uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition'.¹⁸ Benjamin adds a historical gloss to the concept of tradition. He argues that 'the contextual integration of art in tradition found its expression in the cult. We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual—first the magical, then the



(Figure 3)

¹⁴ Ibid. p.10.

¹⁵ Mandy Merck's critique of the Jamesonian reading of the 'Diamond Dust Shoes' is useful. 'This is not to deny that *Diamond Dust Shoes* (silkscreen of a photographic negative of a commercial display) radiates seriality and simulation. The resemblance of these dozen shoes to one another (and to the previous generations of the image) emphasizes an internal correspondence that abstracts the figure from the ground. The consequential self-referentiality is indisputable, but not in a way that resists interpretation', Mandy Merck, 'Figuring Out Andy Warhol', *Pop Out: Queer Warhol*, (ed.) Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley, & José Esteban Muñoz (Durham: North Carolina, 1996), p.235.

¹⁶ Jameson's emphasis on the 'decorative exhilaration' that he identifies as operating in Warhol's work is worth bearing in mind. We will return to the theoretical implications of aesthetic 'decoration' later in this chapter.

¹⁷ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (Schocken Books: New York, 1968), p.221.

¹⁸ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p.223.

religious kind'¹⁹. Benjamin reasons that the auratic can never be completely separated from the ritualistic. In Benjamin's words: 'the unique value of the "authentic" work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value'.²⁰

Benjamin's discussion of auratic ritualism provides us with a means to interpret Warhol's 'Diamond Dust Shoes'. If we look more closely at the 'the spangling of gilt sand that seals the surface of the painting' (Jameson), we are better placed to appreciate that Warhol is archly highlighting the role that auratic ritual plays in the production of his art works. It is self-evident that Warhol's aesthetic is structured around notions of mechanical reproduction. However, the seemingly antithetical concepts of ritualistic aura and mechanistic aesthetic reproduction exist coterminously in the work of Warhol. Recall that the glinting dust of the 'Diamond Dust Shoes' had to be applied *after* the production of the print. This brings to mind the quasi-religious image of the Warholian producer scattering precious dust over his canvases, much as a priest would sprinkle holy water.²¹ On the one hand, what we have here is an artist of the mechanical age applying the finishing touches to his mass produced canvases. On the other, we have the approximation of a quasi-religious process of aesthetic transubstantiation.²²

In short, we are witnessing Warhol's remarkable, almost ritualistic ability to confer far-reaching aesthetic meaning with the simplest scattering of dust. However, in his rush to castigate Warhol's 'Diamond Dust Shoes', Jameson fails to account for the underlying complexities of this seemingly brash and unreflective example of postmodern Pop. That is to say, Jameson does not adequately account for the materialistic dimension of Warhol's

¹⁹ Ibid. p.223.

²⁰ Ibid. p.224.

²¹ Given that he was a practicing Ruthenian Rite Catholic, Warhol would have been well aware of ritualistic religious connotations of this aspect of his aesthetic production.

²² My reference to the Catholic rite of transubstantiation echoes Arthur C. Danto's famous appropriation of religious terminology in *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (1981). Danto's account of the transfiguration of the commonplace begins with Marcel Duchamp. Danto points out that it was Duchamp 'who first performed the subtle miracle of transforming, into works of art, objects from the *Lebenswelt* of commonplace existence: a grooming comb, a bottle rack, a bicycle wheel, a urinal', A.C. Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1981), p.vi. However, Danto goes on to suggest that '[i]t is (just) possible to appreciate his acts as setting them at a certain aesthetic distance, rendering them as improbable candidates for aesthetic delectation: practical demonstrations that beauty of a sort can be found in the least likely of places', Danto, *Transfiguration*, p.vi. Danto argues that Warhol's should be viewed as a successor to Duchamp. However, in Warhol's work '[t]he transfigured objects were so sunk in banality that their potentiality for aesthetic contemplation remained beneath scrutiny even after metamorphosis. This way the question of what made them artworks could be broached without bringing aesthetic considerations in at all', Ibid, vi.

'Diamond Dust Shoes'. In contrast, Ford recognizes that there is more to Warhol's work than mere 'decorative exhilaration' (Jameson). In addition, Ford provides a useful corrective to Jameson's critical shortcomings. Ford tacitly recognizes that the conceptual binaries favored by Jameson do not hold. According to Ford, the Pop of Warhol 'was another manifestation of the surrealists, and very close to Duchamp who was definitely a surrealist after being a dadaist'.²³ The point of the aesthetic continuity that Ford establishes here is important as it differentiates his view from that of Jameson.²⁴ Where Jameson sees clear divisions between modernism and postmodernism, Ford sees a productive blurring of supposedly distinct historical and aesthetic categories.²⁵

As we will see, Ford's productive blurring of apparently antithetical modes of modern and postmodern aesthetic production comes to the fore in his poetry of the 1960s. Equally, it is important to note that traces of this tendency also persist in his late haiku. Ford sees no problem in placing allusions to high modernist literature (Pound) and postmodern aesthetics (Warhol) in close proximity. Ford's intimate juxtaposition of Pound and Warhol implies a clear equivalence between these two very different artists. By fusing together allusions to Pound and Warhol, Ford's seemingly throwaway remarks about the latter's materialist aesthetic approach reveals depth in Warhol's work – and, by association, a kind of auratic sheen – refused him by Jameson. Ford's use of allusion in his late work is indicative of an outlook that aims to bridge the gap between two seemingly discrete cultural and aesthetic moments. To put it another way, the social butterfly Ford wants to play matchmaker between modernism and postmodernism.

However, the fact remains that Ford's aim to play conceptual cupid does not account for the anxiety-ridden aspect of Warhol's spectral appearance in *Om Krishna* and *Emblems of Arachne*. To understand the anxious aspect of Ford's allusions to Warhol, we should turn to the interrelated issues of aesthetic anticipation and influence. We have already established that Pound's appearances in Ford's late poetic and editorial projects

²³ Quoted in Winston Leyland (ed.), *Gay Sunshine Interviews* (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1984), p. 58.

²⁴ Ford does not specify why he believed Pop to be 'another manifestation' of Surrealism. However, I would speculate that it had much to do with the transformative potential of the respective aesthetic movements. Both Surrealism and Pop Art appropriated commonplace items and sought – via their manipulation of these everyday objects – to force a conceptual reconfiguration of subjective perception and experience.

²⁵ Other Jamesonian theoretical antinomies include 'depth' versus surface and modernist originality against postmodern reproducibility.

can be attributed to the presence of a Bloomian kind of literary anxiety. As we know, the appearances and (attempted) effacements of Pound in works like *Emblems of Arachne* and the *Unmuzzled OX Blues* stem from Ford's desire to escape the clutches of one aspect of his formative literary apprenticeship. But can the same be said of the late Ford's allusions to Warhol?

Anxiety and Anticipation: Permissive Performativity and Modernist Pride:

On one level, obviously not: Ford had accrued some thirty years of avant-garde experience before Warhol even arrived on the scene in the early 1960s. And yet, when we look at the following haiku, it is clear that the 1960s are the source of some significant anxiety for Ford:

Don't forget the Sixties
Were thirty years ago
So what else is new²⁶

Arthur C. Danto has argued that our age – beginning in the 1960s – is the Age of Warhol, 'to the degree that he set his stamp on what was allowable'.²⁷ We know that Ford was quick to recognize and encourage Warhol's artistic development during the 1960s.²⁸ However, Ford's late haiku hints at a more ambivalent attitude towards the apparently all-persuasive Age of Warhol.²⁹ Rather than remain in thrall to former cultural and aesthetic movements, Ford wants to know 'what else is new'. It is clear that Ford wants us to move on. And yet it seems that he cannot. The allusions to Warhol that persist in his late works attest to such a fact. In this regard, the Age of Warhol seems to trouble the usually forward-thinking Ford.

Why should this be so? If anything, Warhol's rise to cultural prominence should have been a source of quiet pride for Ford. After all, he played a small but significant role in Warhol's artistic development. For instance, he introduced Warhol to the New

²⁶ Charles Henri Ford, 'From *The Minotaur Sutra*', *50: A Celebration of Sun & Moon Classics*, (ed.) Douglas Messerli (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1995), p.174.

²⁷ Arthur C. Danto, *Andy Warhol* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2009), p.48.

²⁸ Lynne Tillman has commented on Ford's early recognition of Warhol's 'greatness'. Lynne Tillman, telephone interview with the author, 24 November 2010.

²⁹ Tillman has also commented on Ford's 'ambivalent relationship with things in the past becoming markers'. Tillman, telephone interview with the author, 24 November 2010.

American Cinema movement of the 1960s.³⁰ In a letter dated 13 December 1963, Gerard Malanga³¹ was quick to recognize the important role Ford played in Warhol's cinematic development:

Ezra Pound is coming back to the States. Andy has hit The New American Cinema scene; is having a still from one of his movies on the next cover of FILM CULTURE, is making a short new film every week to be shown at the Gramercy Arts Theatre. You launched him and now he's upset the entire scene with his pranks.³²

Ultimately, it is difficult to say whether or not Ford was responsible for 'launching' Warhol's cinematic career. However, we can say with some certainty that Ford's literary works *anticipated* the emergence of a decidedly demotic and permissive artist like Warhol.³³

Consider Warhol's fascination with popular culture. Many of Warhol's more famous artworks feature popular culture figures drawn from the worlds of music and sport: Elvis Presley, Michael Jackson, and Muhammad Ali. The glitz and glamour of cinema also captivated Warhol. His canvases often reproduce the visages of Hollywood stars like Ingrid Bergman, Elizabeth Taylor, and Marilyn Monroe. Ford's early poetry anticipates the

³⁰ Ford's version of events goes as follows: 'Well, I'm the one who took Warhol to the underground films, to see Jack Smith, etc. I gave Andy his first exposure to "underground film." He immediately got turned on. He said, "What kind of camera should I buy?" And I said, "Let's go to Willoughby's." So I told him what kind of camera to get. He took it back to his place and put film in it and started waving it around the room. That was his first film. He went on from there. I did a diary and took stills of a Marcel Carne film, "Terrain Vague." I was on the set for thirteen weeks, taking photos and writing. I have all these stills'. 'Charles Henri Ford', Charles Henri Ford interviewed by Allen Frame, *Journal of Contemporary Art* (Online Edition): <http://www.jca-online.com/ford.html>. Last accessed: 10 January 2011. Warhol himself acknowledged the role played by Ford: 'I'd met the surrealist poet Charles Henri Ford at a party that his sister Ruth Ford, the actress, who was married to Zachary Scott, gave at her apartment in the Dakota on Central Park West and 72nd Street, and Charles Henri and I began going around together to some of the underground movie screenings. He took me to a party that Marie Menken and her husband Willard Mass, underground filmmakers and poets, gave at their place in Brooklyn Heights at the foot of Montague Street'. Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, p.32. Warhol's recollections are also confirmed by Tony Scherman and David Dalton: *Andy Warhol: His Controversial Life, Art and Colorful Times* (London: JR Books, 2010), p.145.

³¹ Malanga was Warhol's silk-screening assistant. Ford introduced Malanga to Warhol in the fall of 1962. See Warhol and Hackett, *POPism* (London: Penguin, 2010), pp.33-4.

³² Gerard Malanga to Charles Henri Ford, 13 December 1963. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 14, Folder 3.

³³ In an unpublished essay, the ever-astute Parker Tyler argues that 'Ford was writing pop-balled poems when Allen Ginsberg—or, for that matter, Andy Warhol—was considering what in the world to do with life and Bob Dylan was not yet', Parker Tyler, 'Charles Henri Ford: From Poet to Graphipoet' [1965], p.7. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 3, Box, 18, Folder 4.

typical Warholian emphasis on the (visual) pleasures afforded by the movies of Hollywood. Consider Ford's evocation of that most archetypal American cinematic figure in his 'Dicty Glide in Central Park Menagerie' (1938):

Cowboy, where's your class-conscious horse?
That's what everybody asks.
Say the child Jesus pulled a toy pistol,
how far off could you stand
and your whip's tip mate the muzzle?³⁴

Ford's irreverent treatment of the anonymous, horseless, and 'class-conscious' cowboy³⁵ is part of a larger, cinematically orientated poem:

Tap-dance, pole-cat, oh we'll ramble, ramble,
are there no skunks in beer-joints?
When he saw at his feet, not something to eat,
but a girl in a frozen swoon.³⁶

Ford evokes the tap dances of Hollywood stars like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in his 'Dicty'. Ford's poem is highly responsive to the demotic pleasures³⁷ afforded by popular film.³⁸ Ford's depiction of 'a girl in a frozen swoon' is also suitably filmic.³⁹ Much as the gallant hero always seems to catch his swooning cinematic sweetheart, Ford's 'Dicty' seeks to gather up all that is demotic in a loving embrace.

As well as anticipating Warhol's focus on the imagery associated with popular culture, Ford's demotic attitude can be contrasted with that of his high modernist forebears. More specifically, we can read Ford's 'Dicty' alongside T.S. Eliot's 'Prufrock':

Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,

³⁴ Charles Henri Ford, *The Garden of Disorder* (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1938), p.77.

³⁵ Cinematic representations of the cowboy came also to preoccupy Warhol. His interest in the genre of the Hollywood Western found expression in the satirical film *Lonesome Cowboys* (1968).

³⁶ Ford, *Garden of Disorder*, p.77.

³⁷ Mention should also be made of the demotic, urban 'beer-joint' setting that features in Ford's 'Dicty'.

³⁸ In this respect, Ford's 'Dicty' might be said to anticipate the poetry of another American cinephile: Frank O'Hara.

³⁹ It is also decidedly 'camp'. Ford flags up the camp aspect of his poem via his choice of title. Ford's title refers to a jazz number ('The Dicty Gilde') by Duke Ellington and his Cotton Club Orchestra. A 'Dicty' is something that is ostentatiously stylish. The 'stylish' quality of Ford's work will be considered momentarily.

The muttering retreats
 Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
 And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
 Streets that follow like a tedious argument
 Of insidious intent⁴⁰

The contrast between Eliot and Ford's respective treatments of popular sites of urban pleasure (restaurants, dive-bars, cheap hotels) is pronounced. Where Eliot's famous lines register a profound sense of restlessness and unease, Ford delights in the pleasures afforded by his 'rambles' through the carnivalesque urban landscape. Similarly, where we find a reluctant and uncertain Eliotian figure 'muttering' about 'sawdust restaurants' set against a backdrop of 'insidious' urban tedium, we witness Ford verily 'galloping' towards the 'skunks in beer-joints'. It is this carefree, camp attitude that distinguishes Ford's project from that of the high modernist forebears. Whilst the ironically detached Eliot is reluctant to engage with the pleasures of the popular, Ford implicitly recognizes the potential afforded by adopting what we might call a camp poetic stance. Susan Sontag argues that '[c]amp responds particularly to the markedly attenuated and to the strongly exaggerated'.⁴¹ Camp is registered at a formal level in Ford's 'Dicty'. There is deliberate exaggeration and repetition in Ford's evocation of rambling and galloping. The same is true of the exaggerated physical gesture of the 'frozen swoon'. According to Sontag, '[c]haracter is understood as a state of continual incandescence—a person being one, very intense thing. This attitude toward character is a key element of the theatricalization of experience embodied in the Camp sensibility'.⁴²

Whilst we get an emergent sense of theatricality in Ford's 'frozen swoon', the performative aspect of his approach really comes to the fore in *The Young and Evil* (1933). In this prescient collaborative text (co-authored with Parker Tyler), performativity reigns supreme. Somewhat unsurprisingly, the performative aspect of *The Young and Evil* has ensured its status as a foundational text of queer modernism.⁴³ Juan A. Suárez argues that '[a] recurring yet understudied trait in queer modernism is its receptiveness towards "low culture," manifest in the frequent attempt to fuse experimental modernism with popular

⁴⁰ T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), p.13.

⁴¹ Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (London: Vintage, 1994), p.279.

⁴² Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, p.286.

⁴³ As we will see later, *The Young and Evil* anticipates aspects of Warhol with its opening up of textual fringe space, suitable for the expression of queer desire.

energies'.⁴⁴ This is what we get in Ford and Tyler's *The Young and Evil*. Ford and Tyler self-consciously foreground their awareness of trends in avant-garde writing:

Theodosia was reading. Julian was lying on his back and heard her voice: Wyndham Lewis says that a page of a servant-girl novel smashed up equals a page of Gertrude Stein. What Julian said Mr. Lewis means is that he thinks Miss Stein is purely negative, but he has no better word for the behavior of the organism than negative; Miss Stein is writing or walking. In one way these are the same. In neither case is she smashing the pages of a servant-girl novel. Theodosia was pleased. Suppose we go dancing tonight at the Tavern.⁴⁵

This passage is fairly typical of *The Young and Evil*. Notice that Ford and Tyler immediately undercut any potentially 'serious' discussion of avant-garde writing with the infinitely more pressing request to 'go dancing tonight at the Tavern'. Throughout the novel, explorations of avant-gardism are interspersed with regular forays into the popular sites of low culture: dive bars, dance clubs, and drag balls 'too large to be rushed at without being swallowed'.⁴⁶ Ford and Tyler's fictional counterparts (Karel and Julian) provide a running commentary on 'the vulgarity raw enough to be exhilarating'⁴⁷ that they often witness:

The negro orchestra on the stage at one end was heard at the other end with the aid of a reproducer. On both sides of the wall a balcony spread laden with people in boxes at tables. Underneath were more tables and more people. The dance-floor was a scene whose celestial flavor and cerulean coloring no angelic painter or nectarish poet has ever conceived.⁴⁸

There is a self-consciously 'poetic' dimension to Ford and Tyler's depiction of the 'celestial' dance-floor. But their attention soon wanders elsewhere:

⁴⁴ Juan A. Suárez, *Pop Modernism: Noise and the Reinvention of the Everyday* (Urbana and Chicago: Illinois UP, 2007), p.185. Other critics have noticed the peculiar formal mixture of *The Young and Evil*. In his analysis of 'queer mythology', Sam See suggests that 'Ford and Tyler's text shuttles between two collective, and to them, similar, experiences—those of the queer community and literary modernist culture at large—to blur the line between the strange and common, the queer and the mainstream, in American modernism'. Sam See, 'Making Modernism New: Queer Mythology in *The Young and Evil*', *English Literary History* 76 (2009), p.1076.

⁴⁵ Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, *The Young and Evil* (London: Gay Men Press, 1989), p.98.

⁴⁶ Ford and Tyler, *The Young and Evil*, p.152.

⁴⁷ Ibid. p.154.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p.152.

They found Tony and Vincent at a table with K-Y and Woodward. Vincent spoke with the most wonderful whisky voice Frederick! Julian! Tony was South American. He had on a black satin that Vincent had made him, fitted to the knee and then flaring, long pearls and pearl drops.⁴⁹

At this point, the penny drops: Ford and Tyler are less interested in the aesthetic representations of the 'angelic painter' or the stereotypical 'nectarish poet' than they are in meeting interesting 'characters'.⁵⁰ More specifically, they are interested in meeting camp and eccentrically theatrical figures like the 'black satin' clad Tony and Vincent:

Vincent had on a white satin blouse and black breeches. Dear I'm master of ceremonies tonight and you should have come in drag and you'd have gotten a prize. He had large eyes with a sex-life all their own and claimed to be the hardest boiled queen on Broadway. Frederick he said you look like something Lindbergh dropped on the way across.⁵¹

The co-authors of *The Young and Evil* are enchanted with this eccentric drag queen with 'large eyes with a sex-life life all their own'. We might say that Ford and Tyler epitomize what Jutus Nieland describes as 'the joyous hum of public being, physically undone by collective scenes of sympathy, and ever-attentive to intimate potential of public spaces, finding new homes for feeling in uncanny places'.⁵² Ford and Tyler are keen to find new public 'spaces' (in this instance an underground drag ball) that are capable of producing new, intimately charged regimes of 'feeling'.

The regimes of feeling favored by Ford and Tyler are resolutely non-normative. *The Young and Evil* is brazenly queer. Consider the following passage from one of the more 'experimental' sections of Ford and Tyler's text:

baggage grand cocksucker
fascinated by fairies of the Better

⁴⁹ Ibid. p.153.

⁵⁰ Hints here perhaps of Kathleen Tankersley Young's previously cited, quietly camp letter of 22 February 1928 to Ford: 'I am interested in art, my poetry, people who write, think or can thrill equally over a bag of popcorn or a sunset'. A fictionalized version of Young features in *The Young and Evil*: 'Theodosia'.

⁵¹ Ford and Tyler, *The Young and Evil*, p.153.

⁵² Jutus Nieland, *Feeling Modern: the Eccentricities of Public Life* (Illinois UP: Urbana and Chicago, 2008), p.2.

Class chronic
 liar fairy
 herself sexual
 estimate crooning I'M A CAMPfire girl
 gratuitous sexually meaning
 both my thighs are so much
 stouter tongue's hanging
 out sprawled in
 bed lower than my
 naval tie beginning between his
 breasts nest of
 Lesbian eyebrows so perfect what it is to
 blossom before his style started going uphill on one-ballbear-
 ing rollerskates and the curious pain⁵³

Approximating the form of free associative verse, the above extract reads as a litany of all things queer. Exaggerated and brazen: it is also very funny.⁵⁴ After all, how does one maintain one's 'style' whilst going uphill on defective 'rollerskates'? Style is another component of camp. Sontag writes: '[c]amp art is often decorative art, emphasizing texture, sensuous surface, and style at the expense of content'.⁵⁵ But camp is not merely decorative: it is 'something of a private code, a badge of identity even, among small urban cliques'⁵⁶. What is more, the 'private code' of camp has implications in the field of modernism. According to Suárez, '[c]amp is a language of communal identification, usually practiced in public spaces, whereas experimental modernism is associated with private spaces, introspection, and the portrayal of individual interiority'.⁵⁷ Suárez's analysis goes to the heart of the matter: '[c]amp allows for the expression of queer desire, while modernism is most often used in the expression of memory and dreamlike states'.⁵⁸

Suárez's distinctions between modernist privacy and camp publicity are important; they allow for a better understanding of Ford and Tyler's hybridized blend of camp avant-

⁵³ Ibid. p.164. The form of this poetic passage might be said to approximate the style of Ford's later *Spare Parts* and his *Silver Flower Co.* At the same time, notice the emphasis Ford and Tyler place on 'CAMP' in the above extract. Similarly, there are other moments in *The Young & Evil* where camp comes to the fore. For instance, the character Vincent speaks of his desire to 'go to Child's Paramount or pick up a couple of broads and take them up to the joint and *camp like mad*'. Original emphasis. Ford and Tyler, *The Young and Evil*, p.167.

⁵⁴ It is also a defiant act of non-normative solidarity. Ford and Tyler are trying to reclaim terms that are often used derogatively.

⁵⁵ Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, p.278.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p.275.

⁵⁷ Juan A. Suárez, *Pop Modernism*, p.195.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p.195.

gardism in *The Young and Evil*. Suárez argues that '[q]ueer moderns met their like in popular culture'.⁵⁹ The queer propensity for popular modes of expression 'allowed many artists to represent unorthodox desires openly... By immersing themselves in the aesthetics of the popular, queer authors and artists could embody modernism and attach bodily correlatives to urgent queer desires'.⁶⁰ The representation of such 'urgent queer desires' were anathema to the high moderns. As Suárez writes, '[f]rom the standpoint of modernist orthodoxy, there is something illicit and slightly shameful about indulging in popular pleasure, just as there may be about contemplating queer desire'.⁶¹ Suárez makes explicit the link between high modernist orthodoxy and repressive sexual conservatism most frequently associated with Eliot and Pound. Suárez again: '[i]f modernism provided an outlet for queer expression, it did so in a way that was intermittent and conditioned. Modernism was, in sum, as much a liberation as a closet'.⁶²

Suárez is alluding to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's groundbreaking *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990). In her seminal work, Sedgwick develops the notion of 'heterosexual panic'. According to Sedgwick, the 'rhetoric of male modernism serves a purpose of universalizing, naturalizing, and thus substantially voiding – depriving of content – elements of a specifically and historically male homosexual rhetoric'.⁶³ That is to say, male (high) modernism universalizes in order to keep homosexual rhetoric firmly in the closet.⁶⁴ Sedgwick's notion of a closeted, modernist heterosexual panic helps account for the palpable delight that Ford and Tyler take in detailing their innumerable, non-normative exploits in *The Young and Evil*. Following Sedgwick and Suárez, we are better placed to say that Ford and Tyler do this in order to 'to signal their differences from an "orthodox" modernism that often upheld social and sexual conservatism'.⁶⁵ Ford and Tyler *publicize* their break from orthodox modernism via the use of theatrical exaggeration and

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.192.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p.190.

⁶¹ Ibid. p.192.

⁶² Ibid. p.190.

⁶³ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: California UP, 2008), p.165.

⁶⁴ Sedgwick's critique also includes the *critics* of male modernists. Sedgwick focuses on the criticism that deals with Henry James. Sedgwick argues that '[i]t is possible that critics have been motivated in this active incuriosity by a desire to protect James from homophobic misreadings in a perennially repressive sexual climate. It is possible that they fear that, because of the asymmetrically marked structure of heterosexual discourse, any discussion of homosexual desires of literary content will marginalize him (or them?) as, simply, *homosexual*'. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, p.197.

⁶⁵ Juan A. Suárez, *Pop Modernism*, p.189.

brazenly direct expressions of non-normative desire. In other words, Ford and Tyler seek to bring the inherently non-normative elements of modernism out of the closet.⁶⁶

Ford and Tyler represent boldly those communities on the fringe of (modernistic) society. Joseph Allen Boone argues that

[t]hese communities exist in a fluid and contingent relation to the other disenfranchised populations: the bohemian artist community, political extremists, sexual profligates, the entertainment demimonde, the criminal underground. Similarly, these sites are characterized by a polymorphously labile sexuality whose expressions may run in any of several directions.⁶⁷

In a formulation that recalls Sontag's description of camp, Boone suggests that these marginalized communities flourish in urban spaces. Boone goes on to detail how '*The Young and Evil* links configurations of urban space to the marginalized sexual identities and the practices that such sites engender'.⁶⁸ Boone reasons that Ford and Tyler 'use the city setting to give fictional representation to an autonomous, insular universe in which homosexuality is the norm rather than the exception'.⁶⁹ Boone suggests that Ford and Tyler's decision to represent the interactions of such marginalized communities comes at a cost. Their novel's 'subversively avant-garde style and form, as well as its sexually explicit content, place it at the margins of official modernist practice, in a position comparable to that of the outcast queer fringe it brazenly represents'.⁷⁰ Casting aside worries about the possible threat of their marginalization in the eyes of dominant, orthodox modernism, Ford and Tyler remain steadfastly committed in *The Young and Evil* to providing a textual fringe space where polymorphous, queer desire can run free.⁷¹

⁶⁶ We can discern ostensible similarities between Ford's approach in *The Young and Evil* and his 1976 postcard exhibition. In both cases, Ford seeks to expose the hitherto *closeted* mechanics at work in literary modernism.

⁶⁷ Joseph Allen Boone, *Libidinal Currents: Sexualities and the Shaping of Modernism* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1998), p.252.

⁶⁸ Boone, *Libidinal Currents*, p.252.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p.252.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p.264.

⁷¹ To be sure, the ever-provocative Ford and Tyler were well aware of the scandalous dimension of their intervention in the field of literary modernism. Critics have commented on the fact that Ford and Tyler modeled their text on that most stereotypically heterosexual modernist novel: Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). See Steven Watson's introduction to the Gay Man Press version of *The Young and Evil* (1989) for further details. Boone picks up on Watson's comparison between *The Young and Evil* and *The Sun Also Rises*. However, Boone goes much further than Watson. Boone suggests that 'the experimental text that [Ford] and Tyler produced is not only stylistically but thematically worlds

Devoted as it is to the nonjudgmental depiction of society's outcasts and misfits, the *textual* fringe space (or shelter) afforded to non-normative desire in *The Young and Evil* also anticipates the *physical* fringe space provided by Warhol's Factory. Danto argues that '[t]he Factory evolved into something that was far more than a place for making art. It became a place where a certain kind of Sixties person was able to live a certain kind of Sixties life'.⁷² Danto evokes the shade of Rabelais in his account of Warhol's Factory. The Factory became 'a sort of Abbey de Thélème, the motto of which was Fais ce que tu voudras—"Do as you wish." In Rabelais's Abbey, beautiful couples followed the paths of sexual love wherever they led'.⁷³ Famously permissive, the Factory became an emblem for much of that which deviated from the societal norm. Warhol provided a sociable, communal space where eccentric, disenfranchised characters and non-normative desires could mingle, circulate, and proliferate without fear of prior judgment, harassment, or censorship.

However, it is important to note that entry into the communal fringe space of the Factory came at a price:

At the center of it all was Warhol, himself anything but beautiful, whose personality was that of a workaholic, producing art, setting the direction, and using the misfits that found their way to the Factory as sources of inspiration in exchange for being allowed to watch them do what they wanted to do.⁷⁴

Entry into the permissive world of the Factory could only be gained by submitting to the force of Warhol's passive – yet equally provocative – personality.⁷⁵ Danto also gets it right

removed from Hemingway, for its "lost generation" is composed of the queer fringe that Hemingway's novel continually tries to excise (it is instructive to consider how Jake's sexual dysfunction and Brett's "faghag" propensities would fit right into the world of Ford and Tyler's novel, instead of wrecking the havoc they do in Hemingway's text)', Boone, *Libidinal Currents*, p.255.

⁷² Danto, *Warhol*, p.48.

⁷³ Ibid. pp.48-49. Danto continues: '[t]he people who found their way to the Factory were typically beautiful but also lost, so that what they possessed was at most a kind of "piss glamour," to use an epithet once bestowed on Edie Sedgwick, Warhol's paradigm Superstar. In many cases they were destroyed by the Factory's permissiveness, whether of sex or substance'. Ibid. p.49.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p.49.

⁷⁵ 'Warhol was provocatively passive and always able to initiate the most intense rivalries between his acolytes, lovers, friends, and family. Everyone had to compete for his attention', Simon Watney, 'Queer Andy', *Pop Out: Queer Warhol*, p.25.

when he writes of Warhol's ability to set the 'direction' of activity in the Factory. It is a view shared by Stephen Koch:

At the center of that world, gazed at forever by his beloved media, Warhol managed to use his fundamental passivity to transform himself into something rather like one of his own objects: Absolutely noticeable, yet apparently absolutely meaningless. He created a kind of space around himself, the way an object creates a space around itself, and, within that space, his every action seemed in some obscure way to *signify*.⁷⁶

Juan A. Suárez also agrees with Koch's opinions about Warhol's ability to 'signify'. Suárez posits that '[o]ne could say that throughout his career, Warhol aspired to being Garbo crumbling the butterfly—that is, to bestowing value even on what he discarded'.⁷⁷ Suárez links Warhol's ability to bestow value to an aesthetic practice 'which transformed everyday objects into art objects, and to his equation of art with business—with creating or increasing value. It was precisely Warhol's ability to bestow value that determined his own functioning as a star'.⁷⁸

These comparable critical accounts of the Warhol's ability to 'signify' and 'to bestow value' are important as they help us account for Ford's ambivalent attitude towards the master of Pop. Ford craved literary fame and the ability to bestow aesthetic value from an early age.⁷⁹ As we saw in the previous chapter, Ford was not interested in being an autonomous arbiter of aesthetic taste in the conventional sense. Rather, we suggested that Ford was much more interested in revealing the taste-making and reputation-making mechanisms of circular exchange as a kind of art in and of itself. Ford's formative *Blues* and his later chainpoems can be understood as an attempt to create a poetic space around him. Perpetually setting things in motion, Ford sought to reveal the mechanisms

⁷⁶ Stephen Koch, *Stargazer: Andy Warhol's World and His Films* (London: Calder & Boyars Ltd, 1973), p.25.

⁷⁷ Juan A. Suárez, *Bike Boys, Drag Queens, & Superstars: Avant-Garde, Mass Culture, and Gay Identities in the 1960s Underground Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996), p.245.

⁷⁸ Suárez, *Bike Boys, Drag Queens, & Superstars*, pp.245-46.

⁷⁹ After all, this was a poet who, as an adolescent, took the precocious Russian diarist Marie Bashkirtseff as a source of initial inspiration. Bashkirtseff's journal evidently struck a chord with Ford (as he refers to it numerous times in his own youthful diary, *I Will Be What I Am*). Consider some of Bashkirtseff's opening remarks: 'Or what use were pretense or affectation? Yes, it is evident that I have the desire, if not the hope, of living upon this earth by any means in my power. If I do not die young I hope to live as a great artist; but if I die young, I intend to have my journal, which cannot fail to be interesting, published', Marie Bashkirtseff, *The Journal of a Young Artist, 1860-1884* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Press, 2006), p.iii.

underlying assumptions about poetic construction whilst also providing a space for demotic literary exchange.

As we also saw in the previous chapter, notions of modernist authorial autonomy receded as Ford's poetic voice became one amongst many across the globe. However, Warhol takes things a step further.⁸⁰ Jennifer Doyle reasons that

[t]he very way he made his work reconfigured agency so as to make saying how Warhol actually created or authored his art not only difficult but in many aspects irrelevant. He deliberately tinkered with the melodramas of authorship and boasted that his art-making process was so routinized that, ideally, no matter who followed the routine, the result was the production of a Warhol.⁸¹

Doyle's account of Warhol's aesthetic practice outlines how the Pop master was able to dispense with the issue of 'authorship' altogether, whilst also remaining well positioned to bestow value and meaning on any finished product. But more than this, Warhol's

was a universe saturated with meaning and without gaps, residue, or gratuitousness: everything Warhol did had a place in the orbits of media circulation and market exchange, where it acquired its value, its meaning. This frenzy of signification, which allowed for no loss, turned Warhol into a near magical decoder or bestower of meaning.⁸²

Suárez's account of Warhol's unique and enviable status as the 'near magical decoder or bestower of meaning' is significant when considered in relation to Ford.⁸³ Ford was quick to recognize a kindred queer spirit in the form of the arch circulator and signifier Warhol.

⁸⁰ It has been argued that 'Warhol's persona challenged the artistic identity of a previous generation of Abstract Expressionist, who presented themselves as profoundly tortured, solitary, and private individuals. The negation of the private, individual self in both Warhol's portraits and his own public persona not only subverted assumptions cherished in the 1950s about the self, but also, paradoxically, served as one means through which a new generation of consumers defined its identity in the swinging sixties', Cécile Whiting, *A Taste for Pop: Pop Art, Gender, and Consumer Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), p.146.

⁸¹ Jennifer Doyle, 'Tricks of the Trade: Pop Art/Pop Sex', *Pop Out: Queer Warhol*, p.202. Similarly, in her discussion of Malanga and Warhol's co-authored *Screen Tests / A Diary* (1967), Reva Wolf comments on the fact that Warhol often enjoyed playing 'authorship games', Reva Wolf, 'Collaboration as Social Exchange: Screen Tests / A Diary by Gerard Malanga and Andy Warhol', *Art Journal* 52: 4 (Winter 1993), p.66.

⁸² Suárez, *Bike Boys, Drag Queens, & Superstars*, p.247.

⁸³ Suárez's description of Warhol as a 'near magical decoder or bestower of meaning' recalls our earlier discussion of the auratic hangover that informs the production of the 'Diamond Dust Shoes'.

At the same time, Warhol's seemingly instantaneous success in the cultural field provoked an envious emotional reaction in the incredibly proud Ford. In effect, Warhol managed to achieve with apparent ease what Ford had long wanted to but could not (except in print). Firstly, Warhol quickly succeeded in creating a networked space –the world of the Factory – that was capable of fostering the conditions in which collective and alternative non-normative sensibilities were able to circulate and flourish. Secondly, through the foregrounding of 'media circulation and market exchange' (Suárez) in his aesthetic practice, Warhol managed to expose the mechanisms at work in the circulation of social and cultural capital. Furthermore, he did this whilst simultaneously benefiting from the exposure of such systems of circulation and exchange.

To an extent, Ford's retrospectively dismissive attitude towards Warhol's seamless career moves and the cultural prominence of the so-called Factory scene can be explained by interwoven feelings of personal pride and aesthetic competitiveness. Ford's defensiveness reveals itself in his comments on Warhol. In 1971, Ford was willing to acknowledge Warhol's 'flair for picking out things that are bound to congeal in the future. Andy is a combination of flair, luck and publicity. Without one of those elements he wouldn't exist'.⁸⁴ In the same interview, Ford also praises Warhol's aesthetic receptiveness: 'I think it's this: Andy has always been a receiving station of one form or another'.⁸⁵ But notice that Ford becomes noticeably cagier when the topic of Warhol's influence is broached: 'His influence hasn't been that great. He takes influences much more than he influences'.⁸⁶

It is almost as if something has riled Ford. Read alongside his 1997 conversation with Allen Frame, it certainly seems like Ford's early love for all things Warholian and Pop was by no means unconditional:

⁸⁴ Quoted in John Wilcock, *The Autography and Sex Life of Andy Warhol* (New York: Trela Media LLC, 2010), p.71. Of course, much the same could be said of Ford. Dickran Tashjian has commented on Charles Henri's early flair for publicity. Tashjian acknowledges Ford's 'precocious' flair, albeit in the context of his formative *Blues* years, when '[a] combination of naiveté and nerve allowed Ford to write to notable avant garde figures and ask for contributions to a new little magazine starting out in the provinces of Mississippi', Dickran Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen – Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde 1920-1950* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2001), p.138.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Wilcock, *The Autography and Sex Life of Andy Warhol*, p.55.

⁸⁶ Ibid. p.61. There is an element of truth in this comment. Amongst others, Danto notes how Warhol often looked to others for inspiration, occasionally even going as far as to ask for ideas, or to lift the ideas of others wholesale. See Danto, *Warhol*, pp.32-33.

I remember sitting at one of Andy's gatherings one day, and I wasn't that amused by all these people coming in so I said to Gregory Markopoulos, "Do you think all these people are amusing?" and he said, "Yes!" And I said, "Well, I'm not amused." On amphetamines and talking like open faucets. Ondine non-stop. I was not turned on. Gerard Malanga said, "Go with the flow." Well, he went with the flow, but I just looked at it. I already had my seaside mansion and the flow went by.⁸⁷

Ford's reply is amongst other things, wryly amusing, patronizing, and revealing. There is a degree of irony in Ford's complaints about a stereotypically bohemian scene. After all, we are talking of a writer who celebrated bohemian excess in Greenwich Village during the 1930s.⁸⁸ However, the Allen Frame interview of 1997 captures Ford in a moment of uncharacteristic awkwardness. For a fleeting moment, our typically confident and playful social butterfly seems recalcitrant. Ford seems ill at ease when confronted with the realities (and banalities) of the Factory. Ford appears to be actively distancing himself from what Pop has to offer in such moments. Ford's frank admission that he 'was not turned on' by the 'flow' of the Factory is especially revealing. Coming from a forward thinking figure such as Ford – one who was 'insistent on what was new and what was happening'⁸⁹ – these comments are remarkable. And yet, they appear to be perfectly clear: Ford is apparently content to accept his artistic lot, whilst bathing in the cooling sea breezes cast upon his coastal mansion.⁹⁰

Beyond the biographical, Ford's unimpressed account of the Factory's 'flow' leads to a curious re-alignment with the more socially conservative modernism of Pound. The image of Ford's 'seaside mansion' evokes Pound's idyllic and isolated coastal retreat in Rapallo, Italy. Ford seems to be comparing unfavorably the surface-orientated sheen and diffuse 'flow' of postmodern Pop with the hidden recesses – or epistemic depths – of the seaside mansions belonging to high modernism. That is to say, Ford seems more than willing to sacrifice the sociable chatter of the postmodern Factory scene for the reflective tranquility afforded by a modernist seaside mansion. If we choose to take Ford at his

⁸⁷ 'Charles Henri Ford', *Journal of Contemporary Art* (Online Edition). Ford's interview with Allen Frame is undated. However, given that, in 1997, Frame and Ford mounted a joint photography exhibition at the Leslie Tonkonow Gallery, New York, it is reasonable to assume the interview's provenance can be attributed to this time.

⁸⁸ *The Young and Evil* certainly has more than its fair share of drink, drugs, and idle chatter.

⁸⁹ Tillman, telephone interview with the author, 24 November 2010.

⁹⁰ Ford did rent a mansion near the Cretan coast during the 1960s.

word, it seems as if he is aligning himself with what might be termed a (seaside) modernist retreat.⁹¹ But the evidence suggests otherwise. We know that Ford *was* turned on by Pop. Indeed, as we will see in the next section of this chapter, Ford was ‘turned on’ by Pop to such a degree that his early responses to the emergent aesthetic movement took on a decidedly Warholian sheen.

From the Formative Fordographs to the Self-Reflexive *Spare Parts*:

Charles Henri Ford spent much of the 1950s in Europe. Upon his return to the United States in 1962, Ford strove to resituate himself in the cultural fabric of American aesthetic life. At the same time, Ford wanted to announce his presence and assert some degree of individual aesthetic authority in contemporary cultural circles. However, things did not quite work out the way that Ford hoped. As we will see, Ford’s aesthetic and poetic status had undergone a radical change whilst he was away in Europe. It was a shift in standing from which the increasingly anxious Ford never entirely recovered.

In 1965, Ford exhibited at the Cordier Ekstrom Gallery, New York. The exhibition in question was a selection of his so-called ‘Poem Posters’.⁹² Described by their creator as ‘Fordographs’⁹³, these poem posters were typified – in the words of Maria Fusco – by ‘[a]gile silk-screen-printed letters [that] glance and dash across the posters’ surfaces, saturated with Nu Rave citrics’.⁹⁴ Ford’s lithographs were, initially, created ‘for visual engagement, regardless of the public or private personalities who ignited the

⁹¹ We have been here before. Recall our earlier discussion of Louis Zukofsky’s gradual poetic retreat into an almost hermetically sealed, musical version of the conjugal home. Recall also that we contrasted Zukofsky’s retreat with Ford’s steadfast commitment to sociability and continued poetic exchange. As I hope will become clear over the course of the next few paragraphs, there is no need to revise our earlier analysis.

⁹² Ford evidently thought highly of the poem posters. This much is clear in a letter to Parmenia Ekstrom: ‘I worked for over a year on the creation of these poster poems, and they should climax many years of thought and creativity’, Charles Henri Ford to Parmenia Ekstrom, 10 February 1965. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 7, Folder 6.

⁹³ Charles Henri Ford to Arne Ekstrom, 10 February 1965. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 7, Folder 6.

⁹⁴ Maria Fusco, ‘Charles Henri Ford – Between Bridges’, *Frieze Magazine*: Issue 112, January-February 2008 (Online Edition): http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/charles_henri_ford/. Last accessed 21 January 2010.

inspiration'.⁹⁵ In Ford's words '[t]he method employed... [was] always to combine the paste-up poem with photographs'.⁹⁶ Despite his best efforts at integrating word and image, the Fordographs are arguably less interesting than the subsequent 'paste-up poems' that constitute *Spare Parts* and *Silver Flower Coo*. Fusco asserts that the Fordographs

have a louche holiday feel to them, which, while pleasant to drift into, means they lack the syntactic imperative of the collage poems on display; perhaps this is because their method of production is so much more surface-bound, resembling 'art' rather than 'literature'.⁹⁷

Fusco's account of the overbearing visual element of the Fordographs is fairly accurate. The vibrancy and tonal clashes of the typical color palette of a poem poster often makes detailed inspection of the textual, poetic elements difficult (see figure 4). As a result, the syntactical aspect of a typical Fordograph can often become lost in the dazzling visual mix.

Fusco's specific reference to the 'surface-bound' aspect of the Fordographs is also pertinent. Fusco's terminology recalls the language used by Jameson in his critique of Warhol's similarly dazzling, surface-orientated 'Diamond Dust Shoes'. Similarly, in her account of the Fordographs, Roberta Smith concedes that '[a]t first glance, their acid colors, spliced-together typefaces and pop culture images suggest that Mr.



Figure 4

Ford might have been operating under the influence of Andy Warhol. After all, the stunningly blond Jayne Mansfield is a frequent motif.⁹⁸ The oft-repeated Mansfield motif (figure 5) is useful as it suggests a link between the silk-screened Fordographs and Warhol's well-documented fascination with the aura of famous celebrity faces.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Charles Henri Ford to Nicolas Calas, 16 February 1965. HRC. Charles Henri Ford. Series 2, Box, 7, Folder 6. Notice that Ford emphasizes the role played by *personality* plays in the construction of the poem poster.

⁹⁶ Charles Henri Ford to Arne Ekstrom, 10 February 1965, Charles Henri Ford Papers, HRC. Judging by Ford's letters to Arne Ekstrom – filled as they are with pleas to the gallery director not to pull the show – the explicit content of Ford's chosen exhibition material caused quite a stir.

⁹⁷ Fusco, 'Charles Henri Ford – Between Bridges', *Frieze Magazine* (Online Edition).

⁹⁸ Roberta Smith, 'Charles Henri Ford – 'Printed Matter 1929-1969'', 25 June 1999, *New York Times* (Online Edition): <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/06/25/arts/art-in-review-charles-henri-ford-printed-matter-1929-1969.html?src=pm>. Last accessed: 10 January 2011.

Yet there is one significant difference between the visual focus of the Fordographs and their more famous Warholian counterparts. With the notable exception of the Hollywood starlet Jayne Mansfield, Ford's visual focus often falls on the 'famous' faces of the historical and contemporary avant-gardes.¹⁰⁰ Knowing this, it becomes clear that Ford was keen to situate his visual art within the historical context of 20th century avant-garde production. However, it is debatable whether the crowded gallery setting proved conducive to Ford's aims. In order to appreciate fully what Ford is trying to do in his verbal and visual collages, one needs to pay close attention to the text. The gallery setting in which the Fordographs first appeared did not necessarily take such a need into account.¹⁰¹

A happier balance between the visual and verbal seems to have been struck by the time Ford published his first volume of paste-up poems: *Spare Parts*¹⁰². *Spare Parts* is a warm, playful, and colorful collection of poems. Much like their Fordograph predecessors, the verbal and visual aspects of the paste-up poems coalesce in *Spare Parts*. This mingling of verbal and visual elements produces a final product that is similar to the gallery Fordographs. But the book form of *Spare Parts* prevents the paste-up poems from going the same way as the Fordographs. That is to say, the format of *Spare Parts* allows for a more detailed and considered investigation of the verbal aspect of Ford's work of the 1960s. In this section, I aim to undertake such an



(Figure 5)

⁹⁹ Ford's fondness for Jayne Mansfield also echoes the cinephilic tendencies of the previously cited 'Dicty' in the *Garden of Disorder*.

¹⁰⁰ The photographic backdrops of the Fordographs feature the faces of poets like W.H. Auden, Allen Ginsberg, and Gerard Malanga. The visages of artists like as Marcel Duchamp also feature. Certain poems are about famous avant-garde figures like André Breton and others feature dedications to younger writers like Philip Lamantia. Ford knew all of these poets, artists, and thinkers. Indeed, a number of Ford 'stars' were also close friends and associates. It is important to acknowledge the sociable element of the Fordographs. In this regard, the Fordographs might be said to anticipate Ford's 1976 postcard exhibition. In both instances, Charles Henri drew on his many social contacts in the various cultural spheres to make his art.

¹⁰¹ Moreover, if Tyler's account of the opening night at the Cordier Ekstrom Gallery is anything to go by, it seems that critics were quick to situate the Fordographs in relation to 'the current fanciness of neo-Dada', Tyler, 'Charles Henri Ford: From Poet to Graphipoet', p.2. In contrast, Tyler argues that Ford's 'graphipoems are too refined and special' to be dismissed as examples of 'prevalent Pop'. Ibid. p.2. Elsewhere in his essay, Tyler bemoans the fact 'that it's unfashionable to base appreciation of the newest newness in the arts on anything so historic (and, I add, permanent) as aesthetics'. Ibid. p.3.

¹⁰² Vassily Papachrysanthou worked as Ford's printing assistant on *Spare Parts*.

investigation of *Spare Parts*. We will see how Ford self-reflexively considers his position in a contemporary cultural landscape that had shifted significantly during his absence. Simultaneously, we will consider how *Spare Parts* might be considered a commentary on the changing modes of aesthetic production in the 1960s. In addition, we will consider what Ford's commentary has to say about the relative aesthetic merits of Warhol.

Few contemporary critics knew what to make of Ford's hybridized *Spare Parts*. Karen L. Rood notes that '*Spare Parts* was largely ignored by mainstream reviews. No one seemed sure what it was'.¹⁰³ Retrospectively, we *can* appreciate Ford's ambitious *Spare Parts* for what it was. First and foremost, Ford's first printed volume of paste-up poems represented the second-phase in a concerted and self-reflexive campaign to reinsert himself into the cultural fabric of contemporary American cultural life.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, even a cursory glance at the cover of *Spare Parts* shows just how keen Ford was to situate himself in relation to emergent trends in contemporary culture. *Spare Parts* features a cover designed by Stan Brakhage (figure 6). Brakhage was a prominent figure in the American underground filmmaking community.¹⁰⁵ It is easy to see why Ford would have felt an affinity with Brakhage. Brakhage was an arch-Romanticist and a self-proclaimed mystic.¹⁰⁶ A firm believer in 'the need to get something internal exteriorized',¹⁰⁷ Brakhage's subjective aesthetic approach would have resonated with the Surrealistically inclined Ford.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ 'Charles Henri Ford', Karen L. Rood, *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Volume 48: American Poets, 1880-1945*, (ed.) Peter Quartermain (Detroit: A Broccoli Clark Book, 1986), p. 200.

¹⁰⁴ A brief note here about my use of reflexivity. I take my cue from Pierre Bourdieu's sociological conception of a 'generalized reflexivity'. Bourdieu argues that a reflexive sociological approach casts 'an ironic gaze on the social world, a gaze which unveils, unmasks, [and] brings to light what is hidden' whilst also 'casting this gaze on itself', Pierre Bourdieu, *Science of Science and Reflexivity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), p.4. The self-reflexive approach that Ford adopts in *Spare Parts* functions in a similar manner to the sociological method put forward by Bourdieu. However, whilst Bourdieu favors a rigorous, scientific, and objective approach, Ford's recourse to self-reflexivity is wholly subjective.

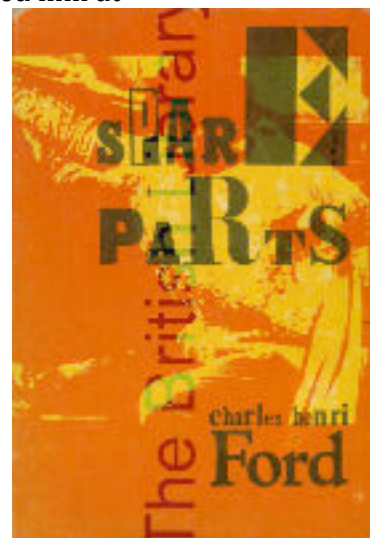
¹⁰⁵ Ford was involved with the American underground film movement of the 1960s. As well as having long established links with the film critic Parker Tyler, Ford also appeared in Jack Smith's *No President* (1967). Ford also made an experimental film about Greek myth: *Johnny Minotaur* (1971).

¹⁰⁶ Early in his career, the young filmmaker declared that 'I believe in magic. I am learning to cast spells. My profession is transforming', Stan Brakhage, 'Make Place for the Artist' (1955), *Essential Brakhage: Selected Writings on Filmmaking*, (ed.) Bruce R. McPherson (New York: Documentext, 2001), p.74.

¹⁰⁷ Stan Brakhage, 'The Seen' (1974), *Essential Brakhage: Selected Writings*, p.164.

¹⁰⁸ We get a clearer sense of Brakhage's deep-seated, almost Blakean commitment to inner truth in 'The Seen' (1974): 'I have seen—as Kirlian photography almost touches on now, any maybe does—I have seen leaves spark or emit a spark-like emanation at their edges that are offshoots directly of the veins within that leaf, and therefore as that leaf grows, do create a metaphor previous to the extension of these

Brakhage's commitment to the investigation of inner truth also aligns him with the 'depth models' usually associated with modernism. Significantly, Brakhage's staunch commitment to the investigation of subjective interiority placed him at odds with his contemporary in the underground film movement: Warhol. According to Annette Michelson, 'Brakhage saw in Warhol's work an elimination of subjectivity. Brakhage had insisted on a preeminence of subjectivity that required a radical assault upon the space of representation, upon the radical separation of signifier and signified'.¹⁰⁹ David E. James tells us that Brakhage's 'entirely personal cinema... developed into the most ecstatic alternative to industrial narrative film style'.¹¹⁰ In complete



(Figure 6)

contrast, Warhol quickly rejected the implications of the 'amateur' style of filmmaking privileged by Brakhage. James recounts that '[a]fter directing a series of remarkable films critically interrogating the mass media, [Warhol] become a producer of feature films and eventually merchandised his celebrity as a brand name for productions conceived and directed by other people'.¹¹¹

James also describes how '[t]he American underground film flowered in the field of these contradictory possibilities and the careers of Stan Brakhage and Andy Warhol are the prototypical instances of the two opposite routes taken by the avant-garde in the 1960s'.¹¹² Involved as he was with the American underground film movement, Ford would have been well aware of the conflicting aesthetic opinions and divergent cinematic routes taken by Brakhage and Warhol. Why then would Ford chose to adorn his first volume of heavily Pop-inflected paste-up poems and repetitive patterns (figure 7) with a cover designed by an artist so staunchly opposed to the unreflective, surface-bound visual pleasures propagated by Warhol? Ford's implied juxtaposition of Brakhage's mystic modernism and Warhol's postmodern Pop is another instance of the way in which he

veins. These things I have seen, one, because I have been involved with seeing all my life and I'm really open to seeing all there is when I'm well', Brakhage, 'The Seen' (1974), p.157.

¹⁰⁹ Michelson, "'Where Is Your Rupture?' Mass Culture and the Gesamtkunstwerk', p.106.

¹¹⁰ David E. James, 'Amateurs in the Industry Town: Stan Brakhage and Andy Warhol in Los Angeles, *Stan Brakhage: Filmmaker*, (ed.) David E. James (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2005), p.74.

¹¹¹ James, 'Amateurs in the Industry Town', p.64.

¹¹² Ibid. p.64.

groggy butterflies beneath the snow¹¹⁶

Ford comes across as conflicted in this particularly disjunctive and ambiguous text. Consider the line that seems to suggest that 'Everybody's Taken 'in' by Warhol. Ford's suggestion lends itself to multiple readings. On the one hand, Ford's remark might be said to refer back to our earlier discussion of the fringe space provided by Warhol's Factory. Read in such a way, Ford's assertion that 'Everybody's Taken 'in' can be interpreted as a tribute to Warhol's commitment to fostering an inclusive, non-normative sensibility. On the other hand, Ford might be said to be casting aspersions on Warhol's apparent ubiquitous position in contemporary cultural affairs. Ford also seems to be alluding to Warhol's ability to pull the wool over the eyes of an unsuspecting aesthetic public in 'Poems wanted NOW'.

However, it is important to note that Ford is not aligning himself with those critics who would seek to accuse Warhol of mere aesthetic charlatanism. Ford is far more interested in situating Warhol in relation to what we might describe as a nexus of earlier avant-garde production. What we have in 'Poems wanted NOW' is another example of Ford's desire to play conceptual cupid. 'Poems wanted NOW' also serves as a textual testing ground in which Ford tries to formulate new patterns of aesthetic equivalence. The first indication of this desire comes with the mention of 'The aesthetics of MATTA'. Ford is referring here to the Surrealist painter Roberto Matta.¹¹⁷ Matta's name should be kept in mind as we turn to visual element of 'Poems wanted NOW' (figure 8).

The visual component of 'Poems wanted NOW' is significant as it comes closest to confirming Tyler's account of Ford as a fully integrated graphipoet. Tyler asserts that

by combining and recombining colors, literary images and optical images in a total visual ensemble, Ford has arrived at an art to read, a poem to look at; whether the graphipoem is simply to be looked at, or also read, there is no violation of a wholly unified art.¹¹⁸

However, if we are to appreciate the 'total visual ensemble' of a paste-up poem like 'Poems wanted NOW', we need to 'shift from image to text and back to verify the frisson to be

¹¹⁶ Ibid. unpaginated.

¹¹⁷ Roberto Matta designed the cover for Ford's *The Overturned Lake* (1941).

¹¹⁸ Tyler, 'Charles Henri Ford: From Poet to Graphipoet', p.8-9.

gained from the basic style of Ford's counterpoint'.¹¹⁹ This is due to the fact that 'the connection between pictorial themes and literary elaboration is by no means self-evident, nor does the relation consist of mere decorative harmony'.¹²⁰ Whilst it is by no means self-evident, it is clear that the 'frisson' produced in 'Poems wanted NOW' has much to do with establishing potential patterns of aesthetic association between practitioners of modernism *and* postmodernism.

We can see this when we shift our attention from word to counterpoint image in 'Poems wanted NOW'. The visual counterpoint of 'Poems wanted NOW' adds the names of two more prominent avant-gardists to that of Matta. On the left hand side of the page, partially obscured by a silhouette of two figures, we can see a photographic reproduction of a fingernail attached to a human toe. Directly across from this image, on the right hand side, we find another photograph: this time of what appears to be a porcelain basin, or perhaps a ceramic washbowl. Looking at these two photographs, one is struck by the similarities



(Figure 8)

between Ford's chosen images and those relating to the work of the prominent avant-garde figures Georges Bataille and Marcel Duchamp. The left-

hand side image is an incontrovertible echo of the Bataillean 'prehensile toe' often displayed in the pages of his magazine, *Documents* (figure 9). In the image on the right, there is an undeniable allusion to Duchamp's infamous 'Fountain' (figure 10).

Orchestrating this ménage à trois, Ford once again demonstrates his flair as the match-making, party planner extraordinaire. In this integrated image-text, Duchamp's conceptuality mingles with the visceral base materialism of Bataille; in turn Bataille (the renegade Surrealist) sidles up to Matta (the Breton-approved, orthodox Surrealist).¹²¹ Completing the triangle, Duchamp's anti-retinal aesthetic practice is forced into conversation with the painterly, retinal imagery of Matta. Having forged a relationship

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p.10.

¹²⁰ Ibid. p.8.

¹²¹ Breton was an early supporter of Matta. Matta was invited to join the Surrealists in 1937. Matta's Surrealist stock continued to rise until 1947 (when Breton publicly expelled him from the group).

between these uneasy bedfellows, our affable host then goes on to introduce his good friend 'Andy' to the mix.

Ford's role as welcoming intermediary in 'Poems wanted NOW' is a timely reminder of his aesthetic sociability. As we can see, 'Poems wanted NOW' is composite text built with European, American, and 'JUST-PICKED Japanese' components.¹²² However, beyond merely bringing components together, as was Ford's wont, there is something else happening here. Not only do Ford's guests hail from different continents, they emerge from disparate times: where Matta, Bataille and Duchamp are traditionally associated with the pre-war European avant-garde, Warhol is figured in relation to the post-war American scene. Whilst acknowledging the disparities between these components, Ford also realizes the potential for crossover between them. Sometimes this cross over is literal, as with the geographical coincidence of Matta and Duchamp's exile in the United States during the Second World War. Sometimes this cross over is conceptual, as the early avant-garde appropriative experiments of Duchamp anticipate the previously mentioned postmodern authorship games of Warhol.¹²³



(Figure 9)

Ford's commentary on the shifting conditions of contemporary aesthetic production takes place against this backdrop of intersecting aesthetic equivalences. In his poetic *Spare Parts*, Ford appropriates the language of the mass media communication to depict a realm in which 'Enchantment' is up 'for sale'.¹²⁴ Ford is aware of the fact that

¹²² In light of our earlier discussion of Ford's circular poetics, it is tempting to read the mention of 'JUST-PICKED Japanese generators' as a reference to his earlier dealings with the VOU Poets.

¹²³ In her exhaustive account of 'Duchamp as a 'Generative Patriarch'', Amelia Jones notes that '[d]iscourses arguing for the progressivity of appropriative postmodernism persistently rest their claims on the innovative authority of Duchamp, who, ironically, is celebrated precisely for his radical critiques of authority and authorship', Amelia Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), p.59.

¹²⁴ Ford, *Spare Parts*, unpaginated. Fusco argues that 'Ford's paste-up and collage poems from the late 1960s could be understood to be as much about the communication of information as about the information they communicate. Their scrappy surfaces appear perforated rather than consolidated by glued-on letters and words cut out from newspapers and magazines, in the style of presentation that is usually reserved for death threats and poison pen letters', Fusco, 'Charles Henri Ford – Between Bridges', *Frieze Magazine* (Online Edition). Of course, Ford's use of 'words cut out from newspapers and magazines' also recalls the previously cited Dadaist word-games of Tristan Tzara. At the same time, Ford's poetic technique also brings to mind the spontaneous 'cut-ups' of Brion Gysin and W.S. Burroughs. However, as documents in Ford's HRC archive reveal, there was nothing spontaneous about the Fordographs or the subsequent paste-up poems. Ford's 1960s poetry underwent a detailed process

auratic ‘word power!’¹²⁵ has become inextricably linked to the global circulation of capital and realms of business where ‘partners depend on a bad case / Of top performance and the international rates are so reasonable, too’.¹²⁶ As we begin to unpack the syntactically disjunctive text of *Spare Parts*, we see that Ford appreciates that matters of aesthetics and economics begin to coalesce in the Age of Warhol. Whilst knowledge of this seemingly endemic imbrication of aesthetics and economics would have horrified his high modernist predecessors, Ford recognizes that the situation is by no means straightforward and that artistic withdrawal is not a viable option.

Spare Parts highlights Ford’s awareness that he is implicated in the workings of a cultural realm where auratic emblems denoting aesthetic uniqueness are in danger of being replaced by the products of mass reproduction. Consider how the very title of Ford’s *Spare Parts* draws attention to the processes of mechanical production. In addition, notice that the text of *Spare Parts* is littered with references to the ‘STA /INLESS & Transistor’d CREED’¹²⁷ of industrialization. The clearest indicator of Ford’s foregrounding of the shifting processes pertaining to contemporary aesthetic production can be found on the spine of *Spare Parts* (figure 11). In keeping with the playful character of *Spare Parts*, Charles Henri Ford’s surname assumes the form of a verbal and visual pun. Charles Henri appropriates the iconic car-manufacturing logo made famous by his namesake, the industrial magnate: Henry Ford. As a young man, Charles Henry Ford changed the spelling of his middle name to *Henri*, precisely in order to avoid being mistaken as a relation of the American industrialist. Consequently, we might ask why Charles Henri would choose to foreground exactly that which he once tried to avoid. It is obviously a verbal and visual



(Figure 10)

of conscious composition and careful revision. A case in point is Ford’s poem poster “‘I Would Like To Change My Sex As I Change My Shirt’ – André Breton (a poem for Philip Lamantia)’. As detailed in Ford’s handwritten notes, the image that was to underlie the poetic textual was ‘Lamantia as Junkie Transvestite’. In this instance, Ford’s archive holds two typed versions of the poem, one of which is heavily annotated. There are two further, handwritten documents – one of which denotes the specific typography and spatial arrangement of the poem. In short, though Ford’s poem poster shares ostensible similarities with the ‘cut-ups’ of Tzara, Gysin, and Burroughs, the compositional processes are markedly different.

¹²⁵ Ford, *Spare Parts*, unpaginated.

¹²⁶ Ibid. unpaginated.

¹²⁷ Ibid. unpaginated.

pun, but is it any more than that? The answer is yes: this act of appropriation is part of Ford's commentary on the reconfiguration of the modes of aesthetic production. Ford is pointing out that names and signatures can easily become 'Rechargeable Emblems / LIKE / new Ford Pickups'¹²⁸ in the contemporary cultural sphere. In other words, Ford is demonstrating his awareness of the fact that the name of the artist – the traditional guarantee of aesthetic uniqueness and sincerity – has become inextricably linked with the impersonal processes of mechanical reproduction in the Age of Warhol.

However, despite demonstrating his acute awareness of the shifting conditions of contemporary artistic production, the simple fact of the matter is that Ford's position within the cultural sphere, that which he so accurately describes, remains open to debate. Ford dramatizes his awareness of this fact in *Spare Parts*. The sheer number of contradictory, self-referential remarks in *Spare Parts* attests to the fact that Ford is deeply preoccupied with the question of his poetic and aesthetic standing. Some of these self-referential remarks are self-aggrandizing and draw attention to 'the / velvet authority of Ford's competition-bred performance'.¹²⁹ Some try to convince both author and reader that 'Ford's miracle crew... Carries / More weight than MISSISSIPPI'¹³⁰. Others are risqué and defiant:

"FLIGHT COAT" fun now pulsing
AMERICA'S hidden chain
what is best for my Fourth Necessity
your life
Charles HOLD YOUR HEART STICK JUST
ENOUGH!¹³¹

Ford is trying to reassure himself that his largely uncredited role in 'AMERICA'S hidden chain' (or assembly line) of avant-garde production will one day be acknowledged. In other words, Ford is imploring himself to stay the course in this passage.

¹²⁸ Ibid. unpaginated. Ford's appropriation of the iconic manufacturing emblem also gestures towards the specific aesthetic practices of Warhol. Charles Henri's evocation of car assembly lines in Henry Ford's manufacturing plant is reminiscent of the assembly line of silk-screened prints in Warhol's Factory.

¹²⁹ Ibid. unpaginated.

¹³⁰ Ibid. unpaginated.

¹³¹ Ibid. unpaginated.

But there are also a number of moments in *Spare Parts* where Ford's self-referential bravado seems to fall away. A more balanced (honest?) assessment of Ford's 'velvet authority' emerges during these moments:

TRUE TRADE roves
 ...then when we sail no place
 our changing GOVERNOR
 outgrown¹³² finds himself

These lines read as a fragmentary, self-referential commentary on the position that 'our changing GOVERNOR' found himself in at beginning of the 1960s. The first two lines can be read as an occluded comment on the roving Ford's decade long sojourn to Europe (1952-62). As we already know, Ford found 'himself / outgrown' and out of the loop upon his return to the United States in 1962. Hence a possible explanation for Ford's 'energized' burst of aesthetic productivity upon his return to New York.¹³³ As we have already noted, Ford was extremely keen to carve out a niche for himself in contemporary cultural affairs. However, we also gestured towards the fact that things did not work out quite as planned.

Ford's awareness of this fact is registered in *Spare Parts*. In one particularly striking moment, Ford comments drolly on his newfound



(Figure 11)

position on the cultural sidelines: 'How to be an authority on UNDER THE SINK RECOGNITION'.¹³⁴ Ford's account of his 'UNDER THE SINK' status tallies with the final lines of the aforementioned 'Poems wanted NOW': 'NO / ONE / EVER / NOTICES / groggy butterflies beneath the snow'. As creatures of flight, butterflies are usually associated with romantic notions of metamorphosis. But Ford's frozen and 'groggy butterflies' are trapped 'beneath' a surface coating of 'snow' that is also doomed to melt. As a result, these trapped butterflies are in danger of passing away unnoticed. What is more, Ford's hopelessly

¹³² Ibid. unpaginated.

¹³³ See Ford's interview with Ira Cohen, *Gay Sunshine Interviews*, p.58.

¹³⁴ Ford, *Spare Parts*, unpaginated.

romantic image can be read as self-referential.¹³⁵ In this regard, Ford's account of the trapped and groggy butterflies reads as another acknowledgement of his uncertain position in the contemporary cultural sphere.

However, the playful poetic voice that drolly sought to recommend 'How to be an authority on UNDER THE SINK RECOGNITION' is conspicuously absent at the end of 'Poems wanted NOW'. Instead, the uncharacteristically downbeat closing lines of 'Poems wanted NOW' seem to suggest that our groggy social butterfly is fearful that his 'under the sink' aesthetic and poetic achievements might go by completely unnoticed and unrecognized. What is more, Ford's anxiety about (his perceived lack of) recognition accounts partially for the importance that he always ascribed to *Blues*. Gerard Malanga has spoken of Ford's life-long preoccupation with 'that dinky little magazine of his'.¹³⁶ According to Malanga, '*Blues* represented to [Ford] the most important aspects of his literary legacy'.¹³⁷ At the same time, it is clear that *Blues* acted almost like a comforter for Ford. *Blues* was something tangible that Ford could show to others in order to assuage his fears about being forgotten. This accounts for the fleeting appearance of Ford's *Blues* in the background of *Spare Parts* (figure 12).

As it happens, Ford need not have worried about going totally unnoticed in the 1960s. Rather, during this period

Ford's status underwent a significant shift. Where Ford had always striven to be 'up to the minute', this shift saw him regarded as an avant-garde relic. This change in status – only truly appreciable in



(Figure 12)

¹³⁵ Ford's allusion to an unnamed 'PRINCE OF Self-Homage' in the second line of 'Poems wanted NOW' certainly lends itself to self-referential interpretations.

¹³⁶ Malanga, telephone interview with the author, 3 September 2010.

¹³⁷ Ibid. It is important to note that Malanga is of the opinion that Ford attached too much importance to *Blues*: 'Obviously, Charles thought that *Blues* represented to him the most important aspects of his literary legacy. When in fact, they only represented the early part of his legacy. It's not something that carried over for fifty years or whatever. I mean, nobody knew about *Blues* anyway! At a certain point, people forgot about that magazine: through no fault of Charles of course'. Ibid. In contrast, Malanga regards the more famous *View* and the poem-posters as the major elements of Ford's legacy. Whilst Malanga's comments about Ford are extremely insightful, I would disagree with his assertion that *Blues* was 'not something that carried over for fifty years or whatever'. *Blues* sets Ford's career in motion and informs many of his subsequent literary projects. In addition, the appearance of the *Unmuzzled OX Blues* in 1989 represents both a return and a culmination in Ford's literary career.

driven by non-normative desire. Ford leaves nothing to the imagination in the twelfth *Coo*. He insists that 'genitals / should be seen Juice, pulp, peel, everything'. What we have here is another instance of Ford's desire to foreground and celebrate notions of non-normative sexuality. This is especially true of the final two lines of the extract. In these lines, we find Ford celebrating the organic and natural aspects of a non-normative sexual sensibility that 'makes / flowers bloom in all directions'.

Ford's celebration of all things non-normative continues well into in the sixty-fourth *Coo*:

Sex CLATTER of an Echo
 completes the picture Where's the
 LETDOWN It
 Can't
 Be
 Gay
 Without
 COOL¹³⁹

This sort of simultaneously celebratory and defiantly non-normative declaration appears throughout *Silver Flower Coo*. Such passages demonstrate that Ford's desire to bring non-normative sexuality out of the literary closet remained undiminished some thirty-five years after the publication of *The Young and Evil*. However, without wishing to detract from the more positive aspects of Ford's poetic intervention, the fact remains that these celebratory expressions of queer desire are offset by the emergence of something altogether more unpalatable in *Silver Flower Coo*.

Ford's second collection of paste-up poems is at times palpably vicious and vitriolic. An undercurrent of gendered aggression runs through *Silver Flower Coo*:

HOMESICK for America's
 Conspicuous CUNT?
 clean the one you've got.¹⁴⁰

Ford's second collection of paste-up poems is tarnished by a harshness that sometimes spills over into outright misogyny. A number of the poems in *Silver Flower Coo* contain

¹³⁹ Ford, *Silver Flower Coo*. unpaginated.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. unpaginated.

lines suggesting that ‘The angriest gash don’t mind being Belted’¹⁴¹ and ambiguously phrased passages which equate female sexuality with the spread of venereal disease:

For example, The oldtime clap
like two breakfasts... is proudly
 served at
 magnificent
 places the
good thick vaginal jelly¹⁴²

The numerous instances of gendered aggression and vitriol that punctuate the poems in *Silver Flower Coo* also serve to distinguish Ford’s second volume of paste-up poems from their relatively gentle and playful counterparts in the preceding *Spare Parts*. Whilst not excusing his use of – at least questionable, and at worst atrocious – gendered language, I think the occasionally vitriolic tone of *Silver Flower Coo* has much to do with Ford’s unresolved anxiety and increasing bitterness at what he perceives as his unfair relegation to the margins of contemporary avant-garde production:

You’ve seen cunt stretched or twisted.
Nothing takes the place of hardware FISH
Come True that mechanical miracle
a scarred snitch remodeled
When you start THE MOTION... AT
My expense¹⁴³

As we can see, this extract implies a connection between Ford’s gendered outbursts and his frustration with his perceived marginalization in the contemporary cultural sphere. I want to suggest it is against this conflicted backdrop of interwoven aggression and deep-seated aesthetic frustration that Ford frames his unexpected ambivalence towards Warhol and his increasingly ubiquitous brand of Pop.

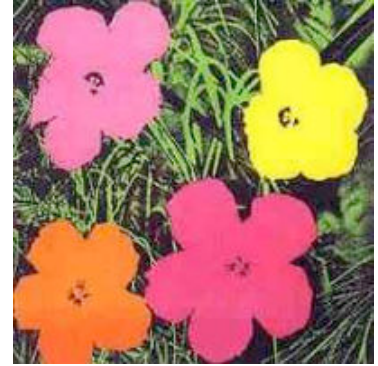
In appearance, *Silver Flower Coo* seems even more heavily indebted to Warholian Pop than the preceding Fordographs and *Spare Parts*. As we will see later in this chapter, this stylistic debt is not a simplistic case of aesthetic mimicry. However, in order to

¹⁴¹ Ibid. unpaginated.

¹⁴² Ibid. unpaginated.

¹⁴³ Ibid. unpaginated.

appreciate how *Silver Flower Coo* diverges from the culturally prominent Pop, it is necessary to note some of the formal similarities between Ford's publication and the work of Warhol. The very title of *Silver Flower Coo* functions as a multifaceted allusion to a variety of Warhol's artistic projects of the 1960s. *Silver Flower Coo* alludes to two of Warhol's 1960s pieces (excluding the allusion to the silver décor of the Factory space): the oft-repeated 'Flower' series (circa 1964), and the 'Silver Clouds' installation at the Leo Castelli Gallery (1966). Ford's title is an amalgamation of both Warhol's flowers (Figure 13) and inflatable clouds (figure 14).



(Figure 13)

Featuring a 'people-collage' cover designed by Ford – and photographed by Factory stalwart Peter Fink at Warhol's Union Square Factory on 7 March 1968 – a case could also be made arguing that *Silver Flower Coo* is itself a product of Warhol's Factory production line. Indeed, the very cover of *Silver Flower Coo* (figure 15) exudes the sort of glacial coolness that became synonymous with Warhol. This coolness carries over into the form of *Silver Flower Coo*. In marked contrast to the colorful vibrancy of *Spare Parts*, the paste-up poems that feature within *Silver Flower Coo* are reproduced in two-tone black and white (see figure 16). Additionally, the sort of integrated image-text that we saw in *Spare Parts* is conspicuously absent in *Silver Flower Coo*. As a result, the form of *Silver Flower Coo* appears almost minimalistic when compared to the colorful visual bustle of the preceding *Spare Parts*.

Despite these formal differences, it is clear that the themes that preoccupied Ford in *Spare Parts* continue to do so in *Silver Flower Coo*. For instance, Ford's fifth *Coo* ('C H SPEAKS UP') opens with the following acknowledgment:

The new artists
for the new era
are now appearing Balanced 6 times longer¹⁴⁴

Elsewhere in the volume, Ford clarifies that these 'new artists' are the ones whose aesthetic sensibility is geared towards Pop:

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. unpaginated.

Up with Pop poetry, THE GAME
 Changes WHEN
 mass delivery Brings on A
 DREAMtreat it MEANS "THE IMAGE" rolls with holes¹⁴⁵

Ford clearly recognizes the 'GAME' changing cultural and aesthetic impact of Pop. He also seeks to remind us of the changes in modes of aesthetic production brought about by an aesthetic that is structured around ideas of 'mass delivery' and potentially endless mass reproduction. Furthermore, when we return to the fifth *Coo*, it soon becomes clear that Ford does indeed consider himself to be an aesthetic precursor to Pop. In self-referential lines that support our earlier account of his aesthetic prescience, Ford poses the following question:



(Figure 14)

How did TERRIFIC St. Charles
 "open up" his fellowmen
 he carved with Ideas.
 NOT everyone can have a
 mother... without feeling its bite.¹⁴⁶

With a conspicuous lack of punctuation, Ford's wryly amusing, capitalized declaration of his own brilliance and prescience assumes a defiant quality. According to the saintly Ford, he has opened up, presumably, the minds of his 'fellowmen'.

At the same time, it is important to note the defiant and self-aggrandizing tone that the saintly and maternal Ford adopts in the fifth *Coo* is offset elsewhere by a gnawing sense of anxiety. This much is clear from the outset of *Silver Flower Coo*. In the very first poem of

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. unpaginated.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. unpaginated. These lines also serve to remind us that Pound was never far from Ford's mind in the 1960s. Ford's assertion that he 'carved' a niche with ideas brings to mind Pound's famous lines in his 'Pact' with Walt Whitman: 'I come to you as a grown child / Who has a pig-headed father, / I am old enough now to make friends. / It was you who broke the new wood, / Now is a time for carving', Ezra Pound, *Personae: Collected Shorter Poems* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1990), p.90.

the collection ('Advance View'), we join a disorientated Ford as he tries to negotiate his way out of an unspecified 'HOUSING MAZE'.¹⁴⁷ Uncertainty is the prevalent characteristic in the first *Coo*. It is clear that Ford still wants to be recognized as an authority in relation to those he perceives as his aesthetic juniors. Opening with a formulation that mirrors the previously cited line in *Spare Parts* about 'How to be an authority on UNDER THE SINK RECOGNITION', our maternal saint ponders 'How to be an authority At the center of your family'. However, as we move through *Silver Flower Coo* it becomes evident that Ford's authority has once again gone unnoticed. In response, Ford lashes out angrily at those who would seek to 'start THE MOTION... AT / My expense'. Ford's ire is palpable, and it is difficult to read these lines as anything but self-referential. How dare the cogs of the contemporary art world continue their 'motion' at the expense of Ford, especially whilst he attempts to carve himself a niche in that very same cultural sphere? What is more, how dare the cogs continue to turn without due recognition of Ford's aesthetic prescience and prior achievement?



(Figure 15)

Ford frames his increasingly ambivalent treatment of Warhol's worth against this conflicted backdrop of interwoven linguistic aggression and deep-seated aesthetic frustration. Throughout *Silver Flower Coo*, Warhol's appearances are framed in increasingly contradictory terms. On the one hand, at times Ford is happy to praise Warhol's signifying power:

andy will DECORATE YOUR TOILET SEAT
—with style More Brilliant Than
something or
other, he says.¹⁴⁸

On the other hand, at times Ford's tone is far more critical:

Complexity blooms are no longer a

¹⁴⁷ Ford, *Silver Flower Coo*, unpaginated.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. unpaginated.

Gamble WHAT WENT WRONG
 Even a Jet-Set child WITH brush-on Burp
 HAS a lot of tacky loot A
 Grocery bill DYED BLACK Monroe's americana
 Rock AND rage in the UTTER
 But how
 can you get A playground For
 yourself Only We don't know Either¹⁴⁹

Ford is evidently referring to Warhol in the ninth *Coo*.¹⁵⁰ The reference to 'Monroe's americana' is an allusion to Warhol's well-documented interest in popular culture motifs and images. Ford's assertion that 'Even a Jet-Set child WITH brush-on Burp / HAS a lot of tacky loot' also refers to Warhol. I think it safe to say that Warhol – he of the 'brush-on' silkscreen technique – is the unnamed subject of these lines. In addition, by 1968, Warhol had – like those celebrities and personalities he documented – achieved iconic status. In this regard, Warhol was – as Ford suggests – a fully-fledged member of the international ('Jet-Set') art world. Consider, however, the wider context of Ford's acknowledgement of Warhol's ensconced position at the head of contemporary aesthetic affairs. Ford seems to be suggesting that something has gone 'WRONG' if even a 'Jet-Set' child like Warhol can perform such dazzling aesthetic feats. In marked contrast to the entirely positive appraisal of all things 'Andy' in *Spare Parts*, Ford now appears to be denouncing Warhol as an aesthetic trickster: a 'child' who, 'WITH brush-on Burp / HAS' found himself

holding 'a lot of tacky loot'.

The emphasis that Ford places on Warhol's accumulation of 'tacky loot' stands in contrast to the



(Figure 16)

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. unpaginated.

¹⁵⁰ Ford is also alluding to Robert Rauschenberg. Ford's description of 'A / Grocery bill DYED BLACK' evokes Rauschenberg's 1950s 'Combines' (where everyday ephemera like newspaper clippings were worked into the canvas). Of course, Rauschenberg was not pure Pop, but rather a proto-Pop practitioner. Ford knew that Rauschenberg had influenced Warhol. When asked whether Rauschenberg was the artist who influenced Warhol the most, Ford replied: 'Probably, because Andy took over the silkscreen and made it his own thing'. Quoted in John Wilcock, *The Autography and Sex Life of Andy Warhol*, p.55.

evaluation of his own 'loot'. Within the forty-ninth *Coo* ('Enrichment for Sale'), Ford declares:

Yes, Christ Gave Us BUILT-IN eek
and the sons of night Get more

thanks to the SADISTIC French
I SAW The Face of STEIN
It's real¹⁵¹

This is a significant moment within *Silver Flower Coo* as it draws attention to an aspect of Ford's writing that may easily be overlooked amidst the syntactical disjunction and morass of sexually explicit details characteristic of this second collection of Ford's paste-up poems. The importance of this aspect lies in its decidedly reflective – even nostalgic – quality. In this respect, the emphasis that Ford places on his meeting with Stein has undertones of insecurity, as he seeks to reinforce his position through recourse to past association.¹⁵²

Counting Stein amongst his aesthetic souvenirs, Ford appears elsewhere to be on the verge of withdrawing into a world of almost nostalgic reminiscence. This nostalgic bent stands in contrast to *Spare Parts*, in which – as we have seen – Ford attempts to reconcile modernism with postmodernism. We get a sense of this nostalgia for modernism at the end of the forty-first *Coo*:

if you were born in 1933...
Cummings' always-summer field of gold
WILL NEVER LOSE ITS RIPPLE¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Ford, *Silver Flower Coo*, unpaginated.

¹⁵² The retrospective dimension of *Silver Flower Coo* is at odds with Ford's forward-thinking aesthetic persona. Ford's favored persona was one of carefree indifference: 'Don't look back—*living well is the best revenge*'. Quoted in Asako Kitaori, 'Charles Henri Ford, 'Catalyst Among Poets', *Rain Taxi Review of Books*, Spring 2000 (Online Edition).

There is also a humorous comparison to be made, one of which Ford must have been aware. It is not the meeting of minds that is recalled here, but the face of the great modernist: Stein. Where Warhol has his endlessly reproduced – and reproducible – iconic faces of popular beauty in his 'tacky loot', Ford has the formidable and 'real' visage of Gertrude Stein. In a curious reversal, where he once sought to situate Warhol in relation to earlier avant-garde and modernist figures (including himself), Ford now seems keen to drive a wedge between such aestheticians and the Prince of Pop.

¹⁵³ Ford, *Silver Flower Coo*, unpaginated.

Although the year does not correspond to Ford's own date of birth, this quotation is biographical insofar as it reflects Ford's admiration for E.E. Cummings, which rivaled his admiration for Jean Cocteau.¹⁵⁴ The fact that Ford frames this reference in relation to the golden hued, halcyon days of his youth adds to the atmosphere of reminiscence. This sheen can also be found elsewhere in *Silver Flower Coo*:

There's no	
Mistaking voice-operated Down-under	you feel fresh,
Prosperous, macabre	
	Dès le depart,
Ford attaqua	SUPPOSE
DADA'S BIG prick	
yelled at him for holding things up	it beats <u>VICIOUS</u>
MORALS... and then some ¹⁵⁵	

In this extremely disjunctive passage, Ford is casting a rueful backwards glance towards a time when he felt 'fresh / Prosperous', and, oddly enough, 'macabre'. 'In the beginning / Ford attacked': so writes the author of the twenty-sixth *Coo*. This remark – half-hidden in spatially disjunctive French – can be read as a self-reflective remark regarding Ford's early poetic and editorial endeavors.¹⁵⁶ However, the main point I want to make here is that Ford's remarks about Dada and Cummings function much like the previously cited comment about seeing the 'face of Stein'. That is to say, Ford seems less concerned with situating himself in relation to contemporary aesthetic practice in these moments than he does with reminding himself of his previous associations with earlier cutting-edge ('up to the minute') artists and writers.

¹⁵⁴ Ford's admiration for Cummings and Cocteau stemmed from what he perceived as their mutual belief in the importance of aesthetic individuality (see Ford's interview with Ira Cohen, *Gay Sunshine Interviews*, p.37). In addition, Ford felt an especially profound affinity with the multimedia aesthetic sensibility privileged by Cocteau: 'I don't know if I was a multimedia artist then, but I must have felt the idea of being one. Jean's the one I think of most when I think of someone who has done work in so many mediums. He did poetry, novels, painting, plays, cinema—so I coincide in some of those media—poetry, novel, cinema. He used to say—that's when you could use the word *poet* without blushing—"I am a poet in everything I do. I'm a poet in the novel. I'm a poet in the theater. I'm a poet in the cinema." You name all his works and he considered himself a poet in whatever he did. That sort of sunk in, when I read that. I felt that if he could do it I could do it'. Quoted in Asako Kitaori, 'Charles Henri Ford, 'Catalyst Among Poets', *Rain Taxi Review of Books*, Spring 2000 (Online Edition).

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. unpaginated.

¹⁵⁶ As we will see in a later chapter, a fresh-faced, precocious, and energetic Ford sought to attack presuppositions concerning modernist expression in his formative literary and editorial endeavors.

This reflection upon the modernist and avant-garde milieu from which Ford emerged, leads one to question whether Ford is lapsing into a retreat analogous to that of his contemporary Louis Zukofsky (outlined in the preceding chapter). Is Ford succumbing to the pressures of (re)situating himself within the contemporary cultural sphere, dominated by 'killer TRENDS'?¹⁵⁷ The simple answer is no. Unlike Zukofsky, this 'alienated Hero / aint MOVING'.¹⁵⁸ I want to propose that Ford tacitly acknowledges that retreat is not an option. Instead, Ford suggests that

A prescription KISS IS ENOUGH
 Dawn still has a future It's More Brilliant
 Than a [sic]
 accident keep in touch¹⁵⁹

This notion of 'keeping in touch' is not only reminiscent of Charles Henri's sociability, and previously discussed postal endeavors, it confirms that for Ford, it is all there is left to do. This is because even before the publication of *Silver Flower Coo*, Ford's close friends and associates had begun reevaluate his aesthetic standing. No longer a maker of up to the minute artifacts, exposing the inner working of cultural and aesthetic exchange, Ford is himself perceived as an historical artifact.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, Gerard Malanga had already begun to refer to Ford as 'Dear Charlie Pop Candy Pop' in 1964.¹⁶¹ Malanga's term of endearment can be read in one of two ways. On the one hand, this kind of recognition defers to Ford's desired position as an established older artist, and positions him as precursor and in direct

¹⁵⁷ Ford, *Silver Flower Coo*, unpaginated. On the one hand, Ford's ambiguously worded description of 'an AGE of killer TRENDS' reads as a colloquial affirmation of contemporary aesthetic developments. On the other, Ford's reference to an age of 'killer' trends can be said to recall the criticisms leveled at Warhol by Stan Brakhage. I have in mind here Brakhage's December 1964 resignation letter from the Film-Makers' Co-op in New York. In his letter to Jonas Mekas, Brakhage attacked the films of Warhol. Brakhage argued that he could not continue to accept support from 'institutions which have come to propagate advertisements for forces which I recognize as among the most destructive in the world today: "dope", self-centred Love, unqualified Hatred, Nihilism, violence to self and society'. Quoted in Victor Bockris, *The Life & Death of Andy Warhol* (London: Fourth Estate Limited, 1998), p.212. In this regard, we might argue that Brakhage's emphasis on the 'destructive' forces of contemporary aesthetics finds an unexpected echo in Ford's reference to 'killer' trends in the twenty-seventh *Coo*.

¹⁵⁸ Ford, *Silver Flower Coo*, unpaginated.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. unpaginated.

¹⁶⁰ The Factory filmmaker Paul Morrissey suggests that Ford was perceived as a 'real historical character' by the time that Pop arrived in the 1960s. See James Dowell and John Kolomvakis, *Sleep in a Nest of Flames: a Portrait of a Poet; a Portrait of a Century – the Documentary Film*.

¹⁶¹ Gerard Malanga to Charles Henri Ford, 24 April 1964. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 14, Folder 3.

relation to Pop. At the same time, the decidedly playful tone undercuts any sense of paternalistic authority and gravitas that may be attached to such a standing, emphasizing the gulf between Ford and his younger contemporaries.

The highly ambiguous poetic account of Ford that features in Malanga and Warhol's co-authored *Screen Tests / A Diary* (1967) functions in a similar fashion:

Genitals are flashing by and then colors.
 In the next year summer will be
 good to you with the young
 friends beside you. The fact of
 the matter is the dream that guides you into a life
 time of sunlight over your head.
 And relations get younger.
 Rain has begun to fall and tears, also.
 What are you thinking about?
 They were lined
 up at the boardwalk
 and the sound of the sea
 shore colliding with waves.
 You do not withdraw from the tear
 drop-out. What's beyond
 the horizon is not visible at high tide.¹⁶²

A number of previously discussed themes feature in Malanga's free-associative tribute to Ford. As well as reminding us of the colorful and visually vibrant aspect of the posters and paste-up poems, Malanga's opening suggestion that 'Genitals are flashing by and then colors' foregrounds the important role that the candid depiction of sexuality plays in Ford's aesthetic output of the 1960s. In addition, we also find an echo of Ford's retrospective account of his 'seaside mansion' in Malanga's evocation of 'the sound of the sea / shore colliding with waves'. Malanga's closing suggestion that 'What's beyond / the horizon is not visible at high tide' is similarly significant as it adds to the general impression put forward in this chapter that a tipping point ('high tide') has been reached in Ford's career. On the one hand, Malanga seeks to reassure his friend that the next 'summer will be / good'. On the other, Malanga's poem serves to emphasize the gulf between Ford and 'the young / friends' that gather around him. That is to say, whilst Malanga's diary entry acts as

¹⁶² Gerard Malanga and Andy Warhol, *Screen Tests / A Diary* (New York: Kulchur Press, 1967), p.17.

a mark of respect, it also serves to situate an ageing Ford against an increasingly melancholic poetic backdrop of 'rain' and 'tears' in which 'relations' get ever 'younger'.

Written two years later, 'Malanga's Life of Ford' suggests that the gulf separating Charles Henri and his younger relations has widened. Malanga debates Ford's position in the annals of poetic history:

but whether his life merely circulated as a hot foot
note in the business
world of poetry i don't know

for that he should go around
with the aura evolving about him
stories passed along as a hearing aid
whisper among strangers and friends

he is like the night of jupiter and lives in that fashion¹⁶³

Later in the same poem, Malanga remarks fondly that Ford 'is forever filling my heart with new inspiration / my mind with new ideas'.¹⁶⁴ In this respect, it does seem that Ford's under the sink poetic 'authority' has at last been recognized. Malanga's account of the 'aura evolving around' Ford is certainly well intentioned.¹⁶⁵ But also consider the emphasis that Malanga places on extreme *agedness* whilst discussing how the stories Ford tells are 'passed along as a hearing aid / whisper among strangers and friends'. The connotations of physical decrepitude that come attached to Malanga's 'hearing aid whisper' are hardly likely to have assuaged Ford's anxieties about his standing in contemporary cultural circles. In moments like these, dearest 'Charlie Pop' comes across less as an 'up to the minute' aesthete – or even a benevolent father figure – than he does a significantly diminished historical relic.

¹⁶³ Gerard Malanga, *10 Poems for 10 Poets* (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1970), p.29. In the last line of the extract, Malanga is alluding to a collection of stories edited by Ford: *The Night of Jupiter and Other Fantastic Stories* (New York: View Editions, 1945).

¹⁶⁴ Malanga, *10 Poems for 10 Poets*, p.30.

¹⁶⁵ The title of Warhol and Malanga's magazine *Inter/VIEW* also functioned as a similarly well-intentioned homage to Ford. Malanga has confirmed that *Inter/VIEW* was 'indirectly inspired' by Ford's *View*. Malanga, telephone interview with the author, 3 September 2010. Nb. The origins of *Inter/VIEW* are disputed. See Reva Wolf's *Andy Warhol, Poetry, and Gossip in the 1960s* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1997), pp.50-53.

Thus it seems that poetic and aesthetic recognition has come at quite considerable cost for Ford. Perhaps this is what one gets for trying to 'keep in touch' (Ford) with your 'younger relations' (Malanga). Ford's involvement with numerous 'up to the minute' moments in 20th century aesthetics – both literary and visual – means that his critics and contemporaries have often found it awkward to place him. That is to say, people are unsure whether to regard him as a contemporary of Pop *or* as a relic of former avant-garde milieus (or both). Caught 'betwixt and between',¹⁶⁶ this awkwardness works against Ford in the 1960s.¹⁶⁷ Ford's previous associations distract from his contemporary aesthetic achievements and attempted critical interventions. As a result, our 'groggy' social butterfly is left feeling a bit 'like a beautiful woman who can't be recognized for her work'.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Tillman, telephone interview with the author, 24 November 2010.

¹⁶⁷ As we will see in the next chapter, Ford's perpetual aesthetic awkwardness poses problems throughout his literary career.

¹⁶⁸ Tillman, telephone interview with the author, 24 November 2010. It should be noted that Tillman did not really know Ford in the 1960s. Tillman has offered this quotation as a well-informed judgment based on their subsequent friendship (which flourished in the early 1970s).

Chapter Four: Building Up and Breaking Down: the Perpetual Aesthetic Awkwardness of Charles Henri Ford

You're always building up just when everything's breaking down.¹

Awkward timing was always an issue for Charles Henri Ford. Writing to Ford in 1940, Paul Bowles remarked that '[y]ou're always building up just when everything's breaking down'.² This wry assertion from Bowles provides an initial means with which to consider what I want to describe as Ford's perpetual aesthetic awkwardness. Historical context is important in this regard. Bowles is referring here to Ford's decision to publish what was essentially a pacifist avant-garde art journal (*View*) at a time when many in the United States supported the idea of a decisive foreign policy intervention in an increasingly war-torn Europe.³ Ford's desire to establish a defiantly experimental periodical is a prime example of his aesthetic awkwardness and characteristic contrariness, especially considering its emergence at a time when avant-garde matters were perhaps furthest from the minds of most people in the United States.

At the same time, it is important to note that the incongruous decision to set up an experimental art magazine during a period of deepening international crisis was nothing new for Ford. Charles Henri's decision to establish *View* at the beginning of the Second World War mirrors his earlier decision to launch *Blues* in the same year as the 1929 Wall Street Crash. Like the later *View*, Ford's *Blues* was awkward, out of place, and generally at odds with the wider concerns and demands of the contemporary American society into which it emerged. From the outset, Ford's decidedly awkward, self-consciously avant-garde *Blues* generated a remarkable amount of negative criticism. Hostile contemporary literary critics attacked what they perceived to be Ford's poorly timed and irresponsible experimentalism during a period of worsening social and economic strife in the United

¹ Paul Bowles to Charles Henri Ford. Quoted in Catrina Neiman, 'Introduction: *View Magazine: Transatlantic Pact*', Charles Henri Ford (ed.), *View: Parade of the Avant-Garde 1940 1947* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1991), p.xiii.

² Bowles and Ford were good friends and occasional collaborators. Among other things, Bowles wrote the musical score that accompanied Ford's puppet-play: *A Sentimental Playlet* (1946).

³ Robert Dallek notes that public opinion surveys conducted in the first few months of 1940 continued to show that the majority of Americans wanted to reform the Neutrality Acts of 1935-39. By late 1940, surveyed suggested that 60 per cent of Americans believed that the United States should act decisively in order to aid England. See Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995), p.256.

States⁴. Derided for failing to engage adequately with the pressing social problems facing contemporary America, the standing of Ford's staunchly experimental *Blues* fared badly in a turbulent period that saw the rise of many socially conscious, ideologically committed periodicals like *Challenge*, *The Anvil*, and the seemingly ubiquitous *Partisan Review*. This is an early instance of Ford's awkward sense of aesthetic timing working against him. Ford's unwavering commitment to literary experimentation during a period dominated by little magazines that sought to articulate what Daniel Aaron describes as 'unformulated radicalism'⁵ all but ensured the marginalization of *Blues*. This may go some way to accounting for the largely forgotten undertaking that was *Blues*. However, this awkwardness is not limited to *Blues* alone: instead it sets a precedent for a pattern that continued throughout Ford's career.

In this chapter I want to consider three instances of Ford's awkwardness during the 1940s and '50s. Firstly, I will consider Ford's relationship with Surrealism. In this section we will address why – given his affiliation with so many prominent Surrealist figures and his generally accepted status as America's first Surrealist poet – Ford features so infrequently in historical or critical studies of both European and American Surrealism. Drawing on recently uncovered archival material, this section also reveals the depth of Ford's engagement with ideas of André Breton and his associates, whilst suggesting simultaneously that it is his inquisitive, questioning attitude that condemned him to the margins of Surrealism.

Having done so, we will then consider Ford's marginalization in the wider context of 20th century modernism. With reference to Clement Greenberg's purportedly authoritative narrative of modernism and the interrelated rise of Abstract Expressionism, this section demonstrates that Ford's awkward associations with Surrealism are the root

⁴ Consider the criticism levelled at *Blues* by Ford's one-time contributing editor, Joseph Vogel: '*Blues* for instance, has persistently avoided life and human beings. The work in it has been metaphysical, treating with petty emotions, describing souls of lousy poets'. Joseph Vogel, 'Literary Graveyards' *New Masses* (October 1929), p.30. Historical context is again important when attempting to better understand Vogel's polemical attack on *Blues*. Vogel's attack on Ford's modernist little magazine was published in the same month as the Wall Street Crash (October 1929). Appearing in Mike Gold's prominent leftist periodical *The New Masses*, Vogel's polemic is unsurprisingly flush with partisan rhetoric. As well as decrying the apparent absence of socially conscious and politically committed writing in the pages of *Blues*, Vogel also suggests that Ford's experimental little magazine is hopelessly out of touch with the more pressing concerns of contemporary social, economic, and political 'life'.

⁵ Daniel Aaron, *Writers on the Left: Episodes in American Literary Communism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), p.391.

cause of his relegation to the footnotes of literary and aesthetic history. Ford belongs in neither camp: his lack of official affiliations with Breton-approved Surrealism ensured that he was not a card-carrying Surrealist; at the same time these loose affiliations with Surrealism precluded him from Greenberg's dominant and heroic narrative of modernism. As we have seen, Ford's aesthetic and poetic approaches are highly informed by notions of personality and sociability. Rejecting Ford's brand of American Surrealism as too reliant on these traits, the staunchly formalistic Greenberg had only negative things to say about the aesthetics promoted by Ford in the pages of *View*.

This rejection of personality and sociability brings us to the concluding section of this chapter, in which we will focus on the tensions between Ford's hybridized brand of poetics and the increasingly prominent New Critics, who sought to de-emphasize if not eliminate authorial subjectivity, biography, personality and cultural history as frames through which to interpret literature. In this regard, it may be seen that Ford's perpetual awkwardness entailed his effacement from official histories of aesthetics *and* literature. With this in mind, we shall then turn our attention to Ford's most ambitious, awkward, and almost totally forgotten attempt at a far-reaching critical intervention: *Blues*.

Awakening the Dreamer: Journeying from Bretonian Surrealism to Fordian Imaginationism:

Charles Henri Ford was the first Surrealist poet of the United States. Confessing to having been 'electrified'⁶ by the poetry of Benjamin Péret, Paul Eluard, and André Breton, Ford remained committed to the promotion and investigation of literary Surrealism throughout his long and varied career as a poet, visual artist, and editor. Ford affirms his allegiance to Surrealism in his long poem 'Comedy of Belief':

To tone down language is to tongue-tie the pulse,
meter of mood, tape-line of longing,
and so we are boosted by the measureless dream
and awake to an algebra whose symbols cry havoc⁷

⁶ 'What made [me] a surrealist poet was because the Surrealists existed before me. They electrified my output'. Quoted in Asako Kitaori, 'Charles Henri Ford: Catalyst Among Poets', *Rain Taxi Review of Books* (Online Edition).

⁷ Charles Henri Ford, *The Overturned Lake* (Cincinnati: The Little Man Press, 1941), p.51.

'Comedy of Belief' contains a number of allusions to the central tenets of Surrealism. Ford's remark about the 'tape-line of longing' can be read as a reference to the primary role that desire plays in Surrealist thought and literature. In the words of Jennifer Mundy: '[t]he word desire runs like a silver thread through the poetry and writings of the surrealist group in all its phases'.⁸ For the Surrealists, 'desire was the authentic voice of the inner self'.⁹ Notions of love and desire certainly play an important role in the work of the founder of Surrealism: Breton. For instance, in his poetic meditation *L'Amour fou* (1937), Breton asserts that love can function 'as a fundamental principle for moral as well as cultural progress'.¹⁰ According to Breton, literary activity represents 'a tried and tested means' with which 'to fix the sensitive and moving world on a single being as well as a permanent force of anticipation'.¹¹ That is to say, concentrated poetic activity can provide a means with which we can better understand (the objects of) our desire and affection. In this way, Surrealist poetry can serve as 'meter of mood' or a 'tape-line of longing' (Ford).

Ford's declaration that 'we are boosted by the measureless dream' also relates to conceptions of Surrealism. As is well known, Breton and his followers looked to the Freudian unconscious and the attendant psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams for artistic inspiration.¹² Dismissing what he describes as 'a purely formal division'¹³ between conscious and unconscious states of existence, Breton argues that '[t]he poet to come will surmount the depressing idea of the irreparable divorce between action and dream'.¹⁴ Breton argues that via a fusion of conscious and unconscious states of perception, the

⁸ Jennifer Mundy, 'Letters of Desire', Jennifer Mundy (ed.), *Surrealism: Desire Unbound* (London: Tate Publishing, 2001), p.5.

⁹ Mundy, 'Letters of Desire', p.5.

¹⁰ André Breton, *Mad Love* (Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1987), p.77.

¹¹ Breton, *Mad Love*, p.77.

¹² Breton praises Freud's myriad psychoanalytical discoveries in the first 'Manifesto of Surrealism' (1924): 'On the basis of these discoveries a current of opinion is finally forming by means of which the human explorer will be able to carry his investigations much further, authorized as he will henceforth be not to confine himself solely to the most summary realities. The imagination is perhaps on the point of reasserting itself, of reclaiming its rights', André Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor: Michigan UP, 1972), p.11.

¹³ 'But in the same way that the dream draws all its elements from reality and implies beyond that the recognition of no other or new reality – so that the splitting of human life into *action* and *dream*, which people try to make us consider as antagonistic, is similarly a purely formal division, a fiction – so the entire materialistic philosophy, backed up by the natural science, bears witness to the fact that human life, conceived *outside* its strict limits of birth and death, is to real life only what the dream of one night is to the day that was just lived', André Breton, *Communicating Vessels*, p.115.

¹⁴ Breton, *Communicating Vessels*, p.146.

Surrealist poet might restore 'man to the heart of the universe, extracting him for a second from his debilitating adventure and reminding him that he is, for every pain and every joy exterior to himself, an indefinitely perfectible place of resolution and resonance'.¹⁵

Breton's admittedly grand assertion allows us to better understand Ford's allusion to the 'measureless dream' in the aforementioned 'Comedy of Belief'. Much like Breton, Ford is suggesting that a committed exploration of the 'measureless' reservoirs that underpin subjective perception might awaken a new kind of poetic 'algebra' whose seemingly irrational 'symbols' might 'cry havoc' and thereby tear apart previously held antimonies pertaining to objective and subjective experience.

However, although this particular example appears as a relatively straightforward adaption of Surrealist literary tropes, elsewhere in Ford's oeuvre we find a far more conceptually intriguing, localized version of Surrealism. Edward B Germain describes this localized version as a specifically American Surrealism: 'it doesn't read like translations from the French – American in its hilarity and ingenuousness and its fascination with sex and slang and the lyrics of popular songs'.¹⁶ That is to say, as well as being informed by Breton's blueprint for literary Surrealism, Ford's hybridized poetry is a curious blend of popular elements and wholly demotic idioms. Consider the following passage taken from Ford's 'Chanson Pour Billie':

Whoa, hillbilly, you've got me where you want me – in the ferris wheel of that fraudulent wail. Like a baptized woman in a moment of depravity, your voice rings out, headstrong and dreamy.¹⁷

'Chanson Pour Billie' is a good example of what Germain has called Ford's 'kinky jazz blues'.¹⁸ The opening stanza of Ford's poem is full of colloquial phrasing ('Whoa, hillbilly') and suitably kinky imagery depicting 'a baptized women in a moment of depravity'. 'Headstrong and dreamy', Ford's characteristically camp 'Chanson' also engages with popular culture figures such as the American jazz singer Billie Holliday.

¹⁵ Ibid. p.146.

¹⁶ Edward B. Germain, 'Introduction', Charles Henri Ford, *Flag of Ecstasy: Selected Poems* (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1972), p.9

¹⁷ Charles Henri Ford, *Out of the Labyrinth: Selected Poems* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1991), p.55.

¹⁸ Germain, 'Introduction', p.9.

The depth of Ford's engagement with 'popular' forms of musical expression is similarly evident in the closing lines of his appropriately titled 'Song':

this is a jingle for your jaw,
pearl-planted, a rant for the blest hee-haw

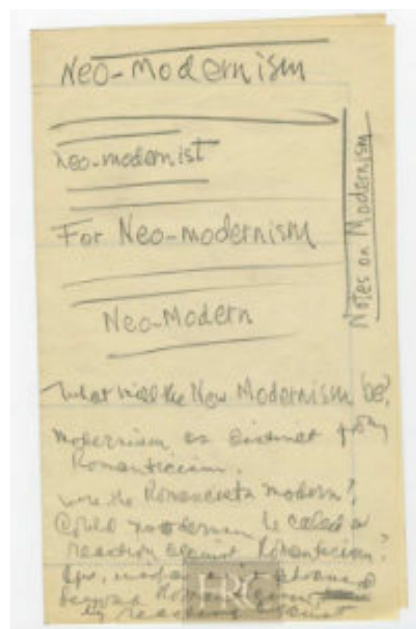
of the pink bee storing in your brain's
veins a gee-gaw honey for the golden skillet

set to heat on my heart's rubies
BABY WITH REVOLVER HOLDS HURRICANE AT BAY¹⁹

In this 'jingle for your jaw', with a playful use of alliteration and child-like rhyming, Ford mimics the infectious and infuriating advertising ditties of American commercial radio.²⁰ Carried along by camp and almost nonsensical babble, the mock headline appearing in the final lines creates a palpable rupture through which his Surrealist imagery emerges. In this way, Ford's 'jingle for your jaw' makes room for the introduction of European (i.e. Surrealist) elements into what might be described as a distinctly 'American' textual environment. In this respect, we might say that Ford succeeds in producing a uniquely hybridized poetic text that is at once distinctively Surrealist *and* incontrovertibly American.

Ford's desire to produce specifically American

Surrealist poetry should be read against the wider backdrop of his more general desire to critically rethink Surrealism. Tucked away in a folder of collated miscellanea in Ford's archive at the Harry Ransom Center (Austin, Texas), there is a handwritten document entitled 'Notes on Neo-Modernism' (figure 1). Comprised of a number of undated fragments, these notes are



(Figure 1)

¹⁹ Ford, *The Overturned Lake*, p.38.

²⁰ William Carlos Williams suggests that Ford's poems 'form an accompaniment to the radio jazz and other various, half preaching, half sacrilegious sounds of a Saturday night in June with the windows open and the mind stretched out attempting to regain some sort of quiet and be cool on a stuffed couch, William Carlos Williams, *Something to Say: William Carlos Williams on Younger Poets* (New York: New Directions, 1985), p.87.

important for a number of reasons²¹. Firstly, these highly inquisitive handwritten notes serve as another rebuttal to the accusations of aesthetic dilettantism levelled at him by Michael Kimmelman. These handwritten notes demonstrate the workings of a keen – if unsystematic – critical mind. Secondly, these notes are important as they reveal the depth of Ford's commitment to the continued investigation of Surrealism. Finally, these notes are significant as they represent the closest thing we have to an explicit theorization of Ford's break away from the authoritarian strictures imposed by the self-styled Magus of Surrealism: Breton.

Ford's fragmentary modernist notes include a 'Critique of Pure Surrealism'.²² Ford's commentary reads both as a thinly veiled criticism *and* as a call to arms. Ford's commentary registers his profound dissatisfaction with the version of 'Pure Surrealism' promoted by Breton. Suggesting that as a 'vice nouveau'²³ orthodox Surrealism 'has lost its appeal, [and] its novelty',²⁴ Ford announces his immediate divergence from the aesthetic strictures outlined by Breton. However, that is not to say that Ford turns his back on Surrealism. He remains committed to the investigation and promotion of Surrealism. Having registered his disenchantment with the limitations of aesthetic orthodoxy, Ford

²¹ A relatively straightforward process of deduction enables us to establish the approximate date of Ford's 'Notes on Neo-Modernism'. Ford's handwritten notes are replete with references to the French poet Charles Baudelaire. Ford's enthusiasm for Baudelaire was at its strongest in the 1940s. During this period, Ford also edited a collection of translations: *The Mirror of Baudelaire* (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1942). His own 'Ballad for Baudelaire' was included in this collection. Ford thought very highly of his 'Ballad'. In his unpublished journal, Ford remarked on 17 June 1948 that 'I consider the Ballad for Baudelaire the peak of my last period. The thing is to go on, with new power, and not relinquishing any of the old knowledge, inspirations, convictions. Inspiration comes in waves', Charles Henri Ford, 'Record of Myself' (1948), pp.28-9. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box, 5, Folder 3. In light of the chronology that he provides, I would surmise that Ford's Baudelaire-infused 'Notes on Neo-Modernism' were written sometime between 1940-48.

²² Charles Henri Ford, 'Notes on Neo-Modernism' [undated], unpaginated. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 4, Box, 4, Folder 2. The focus upon 'purity' within Ford's critique is also worth mentioning as it brings to mind Roger Shattuck's belief that 'Surrealism in the United States was from the start a mongrel in which native and foreign strains never blended completely', Roger Shattuck, 'Introduction: Love and Laughter: Surrealism Reappraised', Maurice Nadeau, *The History of Surrealism* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968), p.29.

²³ Ford, 'Notes on Neo-Modernism', unpaginated. Ford's use of the term 'vice nouveau' refers back to the following passage in the 'First Manifesto of Surrealism': 'Surrealism does not allow those who devote themselves to it to forsake it whenever they like. There is every reason to believe that it acts on the mind very much as drugs do; like drugs, it creates a certain state of need and can push man to frightful revolts. It is also, if you like, an artificial paradise, and the taste one has for it derives from Baudelaire's criticism for the same reason as the others. Thus the analysis of the mysterious effects and special pleasures it can produce—in many respects Surrealism occurs as a *new vice* which does not necessarily seem to be restricted to the happy few; like hashish, it has the ability to satisfy all manners of taste—such an analysis has to be included in the present study', Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, pp.35-6.

²⁴ Ford, 'Notes on Neo-Modernism', unpaginated.

declares that '[i]t is time for Surrealism to come out from underground'.²⁵ Conscious of the fact that by 1940 Surrealism was widely recognized by an increasingly large section of the public, Ford takes a further step to more fully expose Surrealism, desiring to bring it from the margins to make it fully integrated into the bloodstream of American culture.²⁶ Ford thereby takes it upon himself to bring Surrealism out from the underground and up to date.²⁷ Proposing a number of subtle modifications, Ford envisions a transformative reworking of what he believes to be a conceptually stunted Surrealism.²⁸

Imaginationism is the name that Ford gives to his proposed modification of Surrealism. Ford emphasizes the avant-garde heritage of Imaginationism: 'Just as Surrealism came out of Dada – so Imaginationism was born of Surrealism'.²⁹ According to Ford, '[t]he Imaginationist is the son of the Surrealist – with an Oedipus complex'.³⁰ Ford makes it clear that 'Imaginationism does not reject anything in Surrealism – it merely

²⁵ Ibid. unpaginated. Ford's phrasing also draws attention to those issues we encountered in the second chapter: namely the excavation of the closet. That is to say, Ford's choice of words can be read as characteristically camp allusion to issues pertaining to closeted sexuality.

²⁶ Lewis Kachur argues that the numerous 'Surrealist exhibitions of the mid-1930s were a sign of the movement's spreading influence and internationalization', Lewis Kachur, *Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dalí, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001), p.102. Similarly, the enforced relocation of many members of the European avant-garde to New York during the Second World War contributed to the increased visibility of movements like Surrealism in the United States.

²⁷ Ford's desire to popularize Surrealism leads to an implicit alignment with the Surrealist agenda of Breton's aesthetic *bête noir*: Dalí. For better or worse, it was Dalí who was largely responsible for the increased visibility of Surrealism in United States during the late 1930s. An indefatigable self-promoter, Dalí's many American commercial commissions resulted in him being variously described as a profiteer, a popularizer, and a dilutor of orthodox Surrealism. As well as designing the 'Dream of Venus Pavilion' for the 1939 New York World's Fair, Dalí was commissioned to decorate the window displays for the 5th Avenue department store: Bonwitt Teller (1939). The fact that Ford shares Dalí's popularizing tendencies, in complete disregard of Breton's authority, could potentially account for Charles Henri's relegation to the margins of historical accounts of Surrealism. Of course, Dalí is saved from this fate by his prominent involvement with the originators of Surrealism (and his subsequent commercial success as a visual artist). Nb. Kachur's *Displaying the Marvelous* and Tashjian's *A Boatload of Madmen* contain detailed accounts of Dalí's commercial forays in the United States.

²⁸ We might also speculate that Ford's desire to rethink Surrealism stemmed from his dissatisfaction with the self-defeating kind of personal and aesthetic stubbornness displayed by Breton during his enforced exile in New York. According to Alyce Mahon, '[t]he Surrealists' renewed philosophical and aesthetic agenda was demonstrated to an extent by their collective activities while in exile in America, though it is clear that Breton did not try to adapt to American art circle. He did not need to court American audiences or artists; rather, he simply continued in New York the Surrealist rituals he had set up in Paris', Alyce Mahon, *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros, 1938-1968* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005), p.77. Breton's stubborn decision to simply continue – or repeat – previously established aesthetic rituals can be contrasted with Ford's more proactive desire to rethink Surrealism.

²⁹ Ford, 'Notes on Neo-Modernism', unpaginated.

³⁰ Ibid. unpaginated.

transforms everything'.³¹ In Ford's words: 'Imaginationism [is] more revolutionary than Surrealism because [it is] less passive, more active'.³² The distinction that Ford makes between the proactive and the passive helps us better understand the 'the difference between Imaginationism and Surrealism'.³³ Ford alludes to Breton's description of Surrealist automatism as a fundamentally passive activity, dependant on placing oneself in a receptive state.³⁴ It is in such a state that Breton believes one is best placed to produce authentically Surrealist poetry. In Ford's conception of Imaginationism, he wholly rejects the notion of unconscious passivity: instead the conscious mind also needs to be actively engaged. Ford's somnambulist analogy in his 'Imaginationist Manifesto' succinctly demonstrates this distinction:

The surrealist is the somnambule who walks in the depths of the unconscious.

The imaginationist is also the somnambule – but he has awakened while in the unconscious, and keeps on waking.³⁵

In this extract, Ford contrasts the figure of the passive, sleepwalking Surrealist with the more proactive, conscious Imaginationist. Ford is effectively suggesting that a sort of somnambulistic blindness has marred the conceptual and aesthetic merits of Bretonian Surrealism. Ford's implied accusation here is that Breton and his adherents are far too reliant on the insights afforded them by their constant – and decidedly passive – recourse to the Freudian unconscious. Where the Bretonian approach sees the practitioner firmly located in – and reliant on – the unconscious, for Ford, the lessons of the unconscious are there to be consciously and artfully applied.³⁶ In addition, despite the obvious relevance of issues of consciousness relating to Surrealism, we may also find more nuanced layers of

³¹ Ibid. unpaginated.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid. unpaginated.

³⁴ In his instructional account of literary automatism, Breton implores the reader to '[p]ut yourself in as passive or as receptive, a state of mind as you can. Forget about your genius, your talent, and the talents of everyone else. Keep reminding yourself that literature is one of the saddest roads that leads to everything', Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, p.28.

³⁵ Ford, 'Notes on Neo-Modernism', unpaginated.

³⁶ In this regard, Ford's desire to rework Surrealism anticipates John Ashbery's assertion that '[r]eal freedom would be to use this method [literary automatism] where it could be of service and to correct it with the conscious mind where indicated', John Ashbery, *Reported Sightings: Art Chronicles 1957-1987* (New York: Knopf, 1989), pp.5-6.

significance attached to Ford's use of the term 'conscious'. For instance, Ford is conscious of the fact that literary and aesthetic Surrealism operates according to a number of readily recognizable precepts and procedures.³⁷ Ford's poetry demonstrates his keen awareness of the various techniques and principles that underwrite the production of Surrealist literary texts. Moreover, as the existence of Ford's Imaginationist manifesto attests, whilst acknowledging these precepts, he does not think it necessary to blindly follow them.

Whilst I cannot confirm whether Breton ever got wind of Ford's Imaginationist Manifesto, it is not difficult to imagine how he would have reacted if confronted with the aforementioned 'Critique of Pure Surrealism'. Given that he had already marked Ford out as an awkward character³⁸ – and as a potential aesthetic competitor³⁹ – the infamously draconian Breton would not have taken kindly to the existence of a document that sought

³⁷ Ford's recognition of this fact runs counter to Breton's earlier assertion that that he does not foresee 'the establishment of a conventional Surrealist pattern any time in the near future', Breton, *Manifestos of Surrealism*, p.40.

³⁸ On a basic level, Ford's open homosexuality would have surely been an awkward point of contention for the notoriously homophobic Breton. Breton's homophobia is well documented. Consider the following comment culled from the first session of the Surrealist *Recherches* (27 January 1928): 'I accuse homosexuals of confronting human tolerance with a mental and moral deficiency which tends to turn itself into a system and to paralyze every enterprise I respect'. Quoted in José Pierre (ed.), *Investigating Sex: Surrealist Discussions, 1928-1932* (London: Verso, 1992), p.5. However, it is important to note that not all the Surrealists agreed with the prejudicial attitude of Breton: '[Louis] Aragon, unlike Breton, assumed the existence of a plurality of masculinities that were neither normal nor abnormal. He was unable to support Breton's idea of a "normal" man, and in so doing, raised a critical point about the methodology of the *Recherches*. The group's investigation of male sexuality was not monolithic. Aragon, for one, refrained from passing judgment throughout the *Recherches*, apparently trying to be as clinical and analytic as possible to encourage frank, wide-ranging discussion', Amy Lyford, *Surrealist Masculinities: Gender Anxiety and the Aesthetics of Post-World War I Reconstruction in France* (Berkeley: California UP, 2007), p.146.

³⁹ Breton's decision to found an official magazine of Surrealism (*VVV*) whilst in New York can be read as an implicit response – or even rebuke – to Ford's decision to establish *View* in 1940. Realizing that Ford was better placed when it came to promoting Surrealism in America, Breton tried to bring Charles Henri into the Surrealist fold via the offer of an editorial position with *VVV*. It is quite possible that Breton did this in order to nullify the potential threat that Ford posed to his aesthetic authority. Ford certainly recognized the none-too-subtle implications of Breton's ostensibly altruistic offer. According to Dickran Tashjian, 'Ford was apparently asked to be editor of *VVV*, but declined the position for the same reasons that he refused to hew strictly to the Surrealist line in *View*. "I knew [Breton] would be looking over my shoulder," he later said, preferring a catholic stance for *View*', Tashjian, *A Boatload of Madmen*, p.211. In addition, consider Ford's retelling of this suitably awkward – and implicitly competitive – exchange: "I invited [Breton] to the *View* office one day and I said, "Andre, I would like to publish a book of your poems..." So he looked at me and said, "*vous etes malin*." Now that's hard to translate. "Malin" means something like I was undercutting him. "You got me by the balls," so to speak. He knew it would be a feather in my cap, but he also knew that he couldn't resist because nobody else had asked him'. Quoted in Kitaori, 'Charles Henri Ford: Catalyst Among Poets', *Rain Taxi Review of Books* (Online Edition).

to critique the version of Surrealism that he had worked so hard to establish.⁴⁰ In all likelihood, Breton would have castigated Ford as a disrespectful American upstart. At the same time, it is just as likely that the possibility of incurring Breton's wrath would not have perturbed Ford. As we have just seen, Charles Henri was determined to make his mark on Surrealism and was not content to passively receive direction from the so-called Pope of Surrealism⁴¹. However, it is important to note that Ford's refusal to cede to Breton's authority ultimately counted against him on the home front and abroad.

Despite his steadfast commitment to the promotion and dissemination of Surrealism, Ford usually warrants no more than the briefest of mentions in many historical accounts of Surrealism.⁴² Much the same is also true of those accounts that focus on the late emergence of the Surrealist Movement in the United States during the 1960s. At the forefront of this Breton-sanctioned movement was the Chicago Surrealist Group. Founded by Franklin and Penelope Rosemont in 1966, the Chicago Group sought to ensure

that surrealism ceases to be seen, as it is in the U.S. today, as the exclusive and amusing pastime of Avida Dollars [Salvador Dalí]. We shall disturb ceaselessly and without pity the complacency of the American people. We shall encourage and support, with every available means, every expression of wholehearted revolt. We place our lives in the service of the revolution.⁴³

Denouncing what they considered to be the crass, commercialized version of Surrealism operating in the United States, the Rosemont-led Chicago Group pledged an unswerving

⁴⁰ Ford considered Breton's authoritarianism the 'least interesting' aspect of Surrealism. See Charles Henri Ford's interview with Ira Cohen. *Gay Sunshine Interviews*, p. 48.

⁴¹ Pavel Tchelitchev's nickname for Breton was 'Pope Joan'. See Ford's interview with Ira Cohen. *Gay Sunshine Interviews*, p.47. Ford could be equally disparaging about Breton. See Charles Henri Ford, *Water From a Bucket: A Diary, 1948-1957* (New York: Turtle Point Press, 2001), p.216.

⁴² For instance, no mention of Ford is made in Maurice Nadeau's seminal *The History of Surrealism* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968). Similarly, Ford is rarely discussed at any length in many of the critical accounts that chart the historical dissemination of Surrealism in the United States. The only notable exceptions are Dickran Tashjian's *A Boatload of Madmen: Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde, 1920-1950* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001) and Joanna Pawlik's *Negotiating Surrealism: Postwar American Avant-Gardes After Breton* (DPhil, University of Sussex, 2008). Tashjian's study includes two chapters that focus primarily on Ford. Pawlik's account of American avant-gardism includes a chapter that focuses on Ford's involvement with Surrealist émigrés in New York during the Second World War.

⁴³ Franklin Rosemont and Penelope Rosemont, 'Situation of Surrealism in the U.S. (1966)', Franklin Rosemont, Penelope Rosemont, and Paul Garon (ed.), *The Forecast is Hot! Tracts & Other Collective Declarations of the Surrealist Movement in the United States: 1966-1976* (Chicago: Black Swan Press, 1997), p.7.

allegiance to the aesthetic precepts established by their spiritual father: Breton.⁴⁴ Franklin Rosemont is upfront about the absolute aesthetic and critical debt that the Chicago Surrealists owe to Breton:

Surrealism, in the U.S., is just getting started; it is entirely natural that it launches itself upon “une vague des rêves,” that we are preoccupied day and night with the revelations and provocations of “pure psychic automatism,” that we give ourselves over to nocturnal wanderings, fortuitous encounters, the perpetual delirium of words and things, images and objects.⁴⁵

This quotation is a clear indication that the Chicago Group took as their central precepts Breton-approved techniques of surrealism: namely literary automatism, incongruous aesthetic juxtaposition, and the uncanny objet trouvé. In their own words, they were not ‘interested in the Americanization of surrealism, but the surrealist transformation of America’.⁴⁶ This sits in contradistinction to Ford’s approach. Where the Chicago Group adhere to Breton’s prescriptive Surrealist strictures, Ford sought to adapt them as he saw fit. In his own words, Ford realized that one must ‘harness the new, or the horse will wagon you’.⁴⁷ It is this diversion from the strictures of Breton that accounts for Ford’s conspicuous absence from the purportedly authoritative narrative of American Surrealism propagated by the Chicago Group.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Franklin and Penelope Rosemont announced themselves to Breton whilst visiting Paris in 1965.

⁴⁵ Rosemont, ‘Situation of Surrealism’, p.5

⁴⁶ Franklin Rosemont, *André Breton and the First Principles of Surrealism* (London: Pluto Press, 1978), p.120.

⁴⁷ Ford, *The Overturned Lake*, p.13.

⁴⁸ Ford’s refusal to adhere to the strictures laid out by Breton also accounts for the effacement of *View* from the orthodox Chicago Group’s narrative of Surrealism in the United States. Ignoring *View* and dismissing the American writers who appeared in the rival contemporary magazine of Breton-approved Surrealism (*VVV*) as mere imposters, the orthodox Chicago Group toe the official party line. Here is the Chicago Group’s account of the Surrealist emigration to New York during the Second World War: ‘Later, when the Nazi occupation of France forced André Breton and other surrealists into several years’ exile in New York, a few Americans were attracted to the movement and took part in an International Surrealist Exhibition as well as the journal *VVV*. For most of the Americans, however—including painter Robert Motherwell, sculptor David Hare and critics Lionel Abel and Harold Rosenberg—surrealism was but a moment’s youthful transgression in their careers, and hardly a trace of it remained in the work that made them famous in the Fifties. Fundamentally, the group around Breton in New York in the 1940s consisted of European refugees; even their meetings were conducted in French. The few exceptions, the handful of Americans for whom surrealism and its emancipatory ideals truly mattered, tended to be loners who left the city when Breton and his friends returned to Europe’, Paul Garon, Franklin Rosemont, Penelope Rosemont, ‘Surrealism: The Chicago Idea’, Franklin Rosemont, Penelope Rosemont, and Paul Garon (ed.), *The Forecast is Hot*, p.xv.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the otherwise conspicuously absent Ford *did* play a crucial role in the dissemination of Surrealist ideals and aesthetic approaches in the United States. Germain touches upon Ford's role as an aesthetic disseminator in his introduction to Charles Henri's *Flag of Ecstasy: Selected Poems* (1972):

When he began publishing in 1929, Ford was unique: America's surrealist poet. In retrospect, he is seminal. What he accomplished in 1930, most American poets hadn't even imagined. In the pages of his magazines, *Blues* and *View*, he introduced and encouraged surrealism while it passed into the spirit of hundreds of American writers. In his own work he creates the wonder, the wit, and the erotic beauty that have made surrealism the most significant of all modern influences upon poetry.⁴⁹

The recollections of a number of prominent younger American poets like Allen Ginsberg, Kenneth Koch, and Ted Berrigan corroborate Germain's assertion that Ford did, in fact, foster the conditions for the emergence of literary Surrealism in the United States.⁵⁰ Here then we find a further instance of Ford as the ever-sociable butterfly, forging connections and establishing networks. That is to say, recognized or not, he can be seen as having forged the path for those younger poets who could reasonably claim to have 'grown up surreal' – those who freely incorporated similar Surrealist techniques into their work – without feeling any obligation to wholly subscribe to any sort of orthodox party-line.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Germain, 'Introduction', p.11.

⁵⁰ The Beat poet Allen Ginsberg had many complimentary things to say about Ford. See James Dowell and John Kolomvakis, *Sleep in a Nest of Flames: a Portrait of a Poet; a Portrait of a Century – the Documentary Film* (New York: Symbiosis Films, 2000). The first-generation New York School poet Kenneth Koch attributed his understanding of Surrealism to Ford's *View*: 'I think I started writing poems I liked more when I was seventeen or eighteen. I wrote a poem when I was just eighteen, maybe on my birthday, called 'For My Eighteenth Birthday' or 'Poem For My Birthday' and it was influenced by French surrealism in so far as I understood it. I understood it mainly from a surrealist magazine called *View*'. Quoted in David Kennedy, *An Interview with Kenneth Koch*, 5 August 1993:

<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88/koch.html>. Last accessed: 13 September 2010. In addition, the second-generation New York School poet Ted Berrigan was particularly effusive in his praise for Ford: 'About reading at Le Metro, how about the first Wednesday in June? It's free admission, and contributions, you wouldn't make more than maybe twenty-five dollars (or less), but there are a lot of us who sure would like to hear you read. Your poetry and your old magazine, *VIEW*, paved the way for so much of what many younger poets feel is really happening now, when so many other poets were being so boring and so ordinary', Ted Berrigan to Charles Henri Ford, 26 April 1965. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 12, Folder 2.

⁵¹ I am alluding to John Ashbery's 'Growing up Surreal' (*ARTnews* 67: 3, April 1968).

Hitching Your Horse to the Wrong Wagon: Surrealism, Abstract Expressionism, Clement Greenberg's Heroic Narrative of Modernism, and Charles Henri Ford:

In the previous section, we noted that Surrealism was widely recognized by an increasingly large section of the American public during the 1940s. In this section, we begin by contextualizing the increased visibility and popularity of Surrealism in the United States during the early part of this decade. Having done so, we turn our attention to the American avant-garde movement that supplanted Surrealism: Abstract Expressionism. Finally, having surveyed Greenberg's heroic narrative of modernism in order to better understand the conceptual underpinnings of Abstract Expressionism, this section concludes with an exploration of the implications of these factors for the ever-awkward Ford.

Often considered the last historical European avant-garde, Surrealism experienced a surge of popularity in the United States during the early 1940s. The increased visibility of Surrealism in the United States can be attributed to the enforced mass emigration undertaken by the various members of the European intelligentsia in 1941. According to Serge Guilbaut:

By 1943 the surrealists had already been in New York for two years, and the public had become used to their extravagances which, if Salvador Dalí's exhibitions in the windows of large New York department stores are any indication, were by now familiar to the man in the street.⁵²

Long since established as an important aesthetic movement on the other side of the Atlantic, many prominent European Surrealists also benefited from increased exposure in the larger gallery spaces of New York during the early 1940s.⁵³ In the words of Guilbaut: 'Max Ernst was the darling of museums and society matrons alike. Matta was the young eccentric whom other artists took seriously. Masson was doing automatic drawings. The unconscious was on everybody's mind'.⁵⁴

⁵² Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1983), p.73.

⁵³ The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) and Peggy Guggenheim's 57th Street Art of This World Gallery (1942-47) were exhibition spaces that placed significant emphasis on the work of the European Surrealists.

⁵⁴ Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, p.73.

Guilbaut's wry suggestion that the 'unconscious was on everybody's mind' in New York during the early 1940s warrants further consideration:

The influx of European refugees, who brought with them a cultural baggage that American artists had always admired without altogether assimilating, suddenly brought home to New Yorkers especially that the United States was indeed at the center of the cultural upheaval provoked by the war.⁵⁵

Guilbaut's account of the 'cultural upheaval' provoked by the Second World War provides us with a more accurate means of contextualizing the impact of the displaced Surrealist émigrés. Crucially, young American artists and intellectuals no longer needed to travel to Europe to enrich their avant-garde education because the last vestiges of the very same avant-garde were now living among them. The immediate proximity of the displaced European émigrés thus afforded a whole generation of American artists the unique opportunity to reconsider their cultural relationship with national and international culture and thereby 'adjust their actions accordingly'.⁵⁶

Martica Sawin notes that the presence of the displaced Surrealists in New York and the prominent displays of their work 'in its small arena gave the American artists an opportunity to observe automatism at work and to examine at first hand the art that it generated, though they had little awareness of Surrealism's original objectives'.⁵⁷ In this way, the shipwrecked Surrealist remnants of the displaced European avant-garde were to play an important – if perhaps unwitting – role in the 'rebirth' of Western culture in the United States: '[t]he art scene had been so loosened up and diversified by European artists who spent the war years in New York that New York artists were now producing modern art'.⁵⁸ Led by Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko, the loosely aligned New York School of painters came to dominate American aesthetics in the late 1940s and '50s. Otherwise known as the Abstract Expressionists, these younger American artists took their aesthetic cues from the displaced Surrealists.

However, whilst the Abstract Expressionists were clearly informed by the artistic techniques of European avant-gardism, there was 'a clear difference in what the painters

⁵⁵ Ibid. p.62.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.63.

⁵⁷ Martica Sawin, *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1995), p.196.

⁵⁸ Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*. p.115.

wrote about their work, [and] in the image they projected of themselves'.⁵⁹ Where the aims of the earlier European avant-gardes (including the Surrealists) had generally centered around the revolutionary – and decidedly joyous – transformation of life, '[t]o be modern in New York in 1946, to wish to live or rather to survive in one's own time, meant [that one had] to be pessimistic, somber and incapable of painting the visual reality of the atomic age'.⁶⁰ As a result, to be modern 'was also to be incapable of painting viscera, such a statement or description of reality having become frivolous, superfluous, [and] hollow'.⁶¹ Having come to the conclusion that figurative – and purportedly realistic – art tended to deform the very reality that it claims to depict, the younger American artists turned their attention to other modes of representation that might more accurately express the conditions of the contemporary world. Alighting on the notion of total aesthetic abstraction, the New York School artists developed a form of painting that eschewed volumetric depth and representation in favor of flatness.

Significantly, the post-war turn to aesthetic flatness and abstraction also played a primary role in the critical work of the preeminent theorist of the New York School: Clement Greenberg. Greenberg summarizes the history of avant-garde painting in 'Towards a Newer Laocoon' (1940):

The history of avant-garde painting is that of a progressive surrender to the resistance of its medium; which resistance consists chiefly in the flat picture plane's denial of efforts to "hole through" it for realistic perspectival space. In making this surrender, painting not only got rid of imitation—and with it, "literature"—but also of realistic imitation's corollary confusion between painting and sculpture.⁶²

Greenberg's historical – and heroic⁶³ – account of the 'progressive surrender' of avant-garde painting to 'the resistance of its medium' begins with the Impressionism of Édouard

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.111.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p.112.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Clement Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Volume 1: Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986), p.34.

⁶³ Greenberg's narrative of modernism tells the story of the historical avant-garde's heroic resistance to the forces of commercialization and ideological coercion. In his seminal essay 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' (1939), Greenberg argues that the (political) function of the historical avant-garde is to keep genuine 'culture *moving* in the midst of ideological confusion and violence', Greenberg, *Collected Essays and Criticism: Volume 1*, p.8.

Manet.⁶⁴ Greenberg reasons that at each stage in the historical process of progressive surrender

the picture plane itself grows shallower and shallower, flattening out and pressing together the fictive planes of depth until they meet as one upon the real and material plane which is the actual surface of the canvas; where they lie side by side or interlocked or transparently imposed upon each other.⁶⁵

Greenberg's account of the 'flattening out' that occurs in avant-garde (i.e. modernist) painting relates to '[t]he destruction of realistic pictorial space'⁶⁶ that culminates in the radical collage experiments of the Cubists. The Cubist painter systematically eliminated traces of color from his art because 'consciously or unconsciously, he was parodying, in order to destroy, the academic methods of achieving volume and depth, which are shading and perspective, and as such have little to do with color in the common sense of the word'.⁶⁷ As well as doing away with the illusion of depth, the Cubist painter employed similar 'methods to break the canvas into a multiplicity of subtle recessive planes, which seem to shift and fade into infinite depths and yet insist on returning to the surface of the canvas'.⁶⁸ Greenberg argues that Cubism represented a point-of-no-return in the narrative of avant-garde painting. Indeed, he goes as far as to suggest that '[a]s we gaze at a cubist painting of the last phase we witness the birth and death of three-dimensional pictorial space'.⁶⁹

Into the aesthetic void swept clean by Cubism, Greenberg introduced what was to become known as Abstract Expressionism. Whilst space considerations keep me from revisiting Greenberg's individualist, heroic definitions of Abstract Expressionism, it is clear

⁶⁴ Greenberg discusses the genealogy of avant-garde art in his retrospective 'Modernist Painting' (1960): 'Manet's became the first Modernist pictures by virtue of the frankness with which they declared the flat surfaces on which they were painted. The Impressionists, in Manet's wake abjured underpainting and glazes, to leave the eye under no doubt as to the fact that the colors they used were made of paint that came from tubes or pots. Cézanne sacrificed verisimilitude, or correctness, in order to fit his drawing and design more explicitly to the rectangular shape of the canvas. It was the stressing of the ineluctable flatness of the surface that remained, however, more fundamental than anything else to the processes by which pictorial art criticized and defined itself under Modernism', Clement Greenberg, *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1993), pp.86-7.

⁶⁵ Greenberg, *Collected Essays: Volume 1*, p.35.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p.35.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

that Surrealism simply could not fit into his valiant narrative of modernist painting. Greenberg makes his thoughts on the matter known in 'Surrealist Painting' (1944): 'The desire to change life on the spot, without waiting for the revolution, and to make art the affair of everybody is Surrealism's most laudable motive, yet it has led inevitably to a certain vulgarization of modern art'.⁷⁰ Greenberg attacks the vulgar and commercial aspects of what he perceives as the fundamentally compromised quality of Surrealism. According to Greenberg, '[t]he attempt is made to depress [Surrealism] to a popular level instead of raising the level of popularity itself'.⁷¹ Greenberg suggests that

[f]or the sake of hallucinatory vividness the Surrealists have copied the effects of the calendar reproduction, postal card chromeotype and magazine illustration. In general they prize the qualities of the popular reproduction because of its incongruously prosaic associations and the reproduction heightens illusionistic effect by erasing paint texture and brushstroke.⁷²

Greenberg's account of the 'illusionistic effect' generated for the sake of 'hallucinatory vividness' enables us to better understand his rejection of Surrealism. Greenberg is attacking the *representational* aspect of Surrealism. Greenberg is of the opinion that Surrealist painting depends on the creation of 'pictorial forms that will produce a strong illusion of its possible existence in the world of real appearances'.⁷³ Greenberg also believes that '[t]he Surrealist image provides painting with new anecdotes to illustrate, just as current events supply new topics to the political cartoonist, but of itself it does not charge painting with a new subject matter'.⁷⁴ In Greenberg's damning estimation, '[t]he Surrealist image is thus a new object to be posed and arranged, but it requires no fundamental change in the conventions of painting as established by the Renaissance'.⁷⁵ In this regard, Surrealism's reliance on representation prevents the possibility of its inclusion in Greenberg's narrative of the modernist drive towards aesthetic abstraction.

However, the representational dimension of Surrealist painting was only part of the problem for Greenberg. In the words of Caroline A. Jones: '[i]t is Surrealist *subjectivity* that

⁷⁰ Greenberg, *Collected Essays and Criticism: Volume 1*, p.225.

⁷¹ Ibid. p.225.

⁷² Ibid. p.229.

⁷³ Ibid. p.228.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p.230.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

is the problem, its artists paradoxically looking “outside” the canvas to limn the processes of their consciousness’.⁷⁶ Jones notes that ‘[m]ost practicing Surrealists, Jungian complexities aside, would hold that their subject matter came from within, released from the artist’s subconscious rather than the world’.⁷⁷ The subjective aspect of Surrealist painting ran counter to Greenberg’s ideal type of aesthetic formalism. That is to say, ‘the proper “subject” of art in Greenberg’s argument would be *the painting*. Neither the painter nor his psychoanalyzed thought processes would suffice—the only “inside” Greenberg wanted was folded from the abstract surface of a detached and rational art’.⁷⁸ Following Jones, we are better placed to appreciate why ‘Surrealism’s instabilities and intentional irrationalisms (not to say its European qualities) had to be sealed off to produce a modern *American art*’.⁷⁹

Greenberg had to seal off the malignant ‘instabilities’ of Surrealism in order to prevent them from impacting on – and unsettling – the stability of his unified narrative of the historical emergence of abstract painting in the work of younger post-war American artists. To do this, Greenberg had to expend a fair amount of critical energy. As Jones notes, ‘formalism had quite a job regulating Surrealism, given the style’s dominance in 1940s Manhattan’.⁸⁰ Responding to this situation, Greenberg realized that his modernist narrative of ‘[u]nity could be produced only by making abject that which resisted unification, even as that resistant other (Surrealism) is *maintained as such* to certify the ongoing need for formalism’s unifying regime’.⁸¹ Greenberg’s desire for formalist unity explains his routine dismissal of Surrealism. Indeed, even ‘[t]he eventual demise of Surrealism as an active style by the late 1940s would not diminish Greenberg’s need to produce its marginal energies in order to regulate them, again and again’.⁸²

This constant suppression of Surrealism by perhaps *the* leading art critic of postwar America has clear implications for Ford. As we have seen, Ford remained committed to the investigation and promotion of Surrealism in both his poetic and

⁷⁶ Caroline A. Jones, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg’s Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2005), p.178.

⁷⁷ Jones, *Eyesight Alone*, p.178.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p.179.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p.67.

⁸⁰ Ibid. pp.67-8.

⁸¹ Ibid. p.69.

⁸² Ibid.

editorial ventures. This inevitably made him a target for Greenberg. Reviewing early issues of *View*, Greenberg offers the following bristling critique:

View, of which three numbers have already appeared, is a tabloid-sized “poets’ paper” put out by a group of American surrealists in New York. From it we gather that the surrealists are unwilling to say goodbye to anything. And that the American species identifies literature and art with its social life, and that this social life is complicated and satisfying. The gossip is good if you know the names; if you know the people I imagine it might get to be a little too much.⁸³

From this extract, we can clearly see that for Greenberg, the Surrealists – ‘unwilling to say goodbye to anything’ – were operating in an outmoded aesthetic fashion. Failing to move with the times (i.e. with Greenberg), they were necessarily left behind in the heroic push forward. In addition, Greenberg casts American Surrealists like Ford as ostensibly trivial in their approach: something which would not sit comfortably within Greenberg’s demand for a ‘serious’ American art. Further, this emphasis upon the encroachment of the social within the sphere of Surrealist literature and art is at distinct odds with Greenberg’s staunch formalism. It is precisely this opposition to the dominant formalist aesthetic narrative that relegates Ford – and his work – to the margins of post-war avant-gardism.

Falling Foul of Literary Formalism: Charles Henri Ford and the New Critics:

A similar situation arises when we consider Ford in relation to the equally influential work of the culturally conservative New Critics.⁸⁴ Led by John Crowe Ransom, the staunchly formalist New Critics came to cultural prominence in the early 1940s and dominated American literary criticism in the middle decades of the 20th century.⁸⁵ According to

⁸³ Greenberg, *Collected Essays and Criticism: Volume 1*, pp.42-3.

⁸⁴ Heavily indebted to notions of Southern agrarianism and paternalism, New Critics like John Crowe Ransom ‘believed that traditional ways of life were not entirely lost, and that they could be resurrected. The poet’s role was regarded as that of a critical conservative. The poet should criticize and challenge the present through a comparison with an available past’, Mark Jancovich, *The Cultural Politics of the New Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), p.43.

⁸⁵ Frank Lentricchia notes that the late 1940s were triumphant times for the New Critics. Lentricchia also points out that the critical hegemony of the New Critics lasted until the late 1950s. Nb. Lentricchia cites the publication of Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) as a decisive move away from the New Critics: ‘The great hope for literary critics in 1957, when the hegemony of the New Criticism was breaking, was that the muse would somehow be demystified and democratized and that younger critics

Cleanth Brooks, the New Critics wanted to 'deny the heresy which reduces literature to cultural history and thus begets a critical relativism'.⁸⁶ The true inheritors of T.S. Eliot's critical legacy, the New Critics sought recourse to the depersonalized and objective theoretical teachings of their high modernist master. Reacting against the 'ignorant'⁸⁷ impressionism of contemporary academic criticism, and influenced by Eliot's notion of the 'objective correlative',⁸⁸ the New Critics developed a formally rigorous, depersonalized system of literary theory that eschewed historical, cultural, and biographically informed interpretations of any given text. Believing the typical literary text to be an autonomous, self-sufficient object 'embodied in language',⁸⁹ the New Critics set out to discredit methods of impressionistic interpretation that focused on issues of authorial intention and which also suggested that literature be understood in relation to the psychological or emotive response it provoked in its readership.⁹⁰ Rejecting these approaches as over-reliant on the

would somehow link up poetry with the world again as, in Clive Bell's contemptuous formalist phrasing, they brought art down from the "superb peaks of aesthetic exaltation to the snug foothills of humanity"—to the place where the forbidden subjects of history, intention, and cultural dynamics could be taken up once again', Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (Methuen & Co. Ltd: London, 1980), p.5

⁸⁶ Cleanth Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (Dennis Dobson: London, 1949), p.227.

⁸⁷ Consider Allen Tate's damning account of higher education in 'Miss Emily and the Bibliographers' (1940): 'It was—and still is—a situation in which it is virtually impossible for a young man to get a critical, literary education. If he goes to a graduate school he comes out incapacitated for criticism; if he tries to be a critic he is not unlike the ignorant impressionist who did not go to the graduate school. He cannot discuss the literary object in terms of its specific form; all that he can do is to give you its history or tell you how he feels about it', Allen Tate, *Essays of Four Decades* (London: Oxford UP, 1970), p.148.

⁸⁸ Eliot discusses the objective correlative in 'Hamlet' (1919): 'The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked', T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p.145.

⁸⁹ W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley suggest that '[t]he poem is not the critic's own and not the author's (it is detached from the author at birth and goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it). The poem belongs to the public. It is embodied in language, the peculiar possession of the public, and it is about the human being, an object of public knowledge. What is said about the poem is subject to the same scrutiny as any statement in linguistics or in the general science of psychology,' W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Kentucky: Kentucky UP, 1954), p.5.

⁹⁰ In 'The Intentional Fallacy' (1946), W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley argue that responsible literary critics 'ought to impute the thoughts and attitudes of the poem immediately to the dramatic speaker, and if to the author at all, only by an act of biographical inference', Wimsatt and Beardsley, *The Verbal Icon*, p.5. Having done away with the fallacy of authorial intention, Wimsatt and Beardsley then turn their attention to the problem of evaluating the affect that a successful literary work might have on the reader in 'The Affective Fallacy' (1949). According to Wimsatt and Beardsley, '[t]he Affective Fallacy is a confusion between the poem and its results (what it is and what it does), a special case of epistemological skepticism, though usually advanced as if it had far stronger claims than the overall

pursuit of 'gratuitous'⁹¹ feeling and subjective interpretation, the New Critics argued for a purportedly objective, absolute literary formalism. Disregarding details of biographical, social, cultural and/or historical significance – in short, anything that might be considered exterior to the work – the New Critics elevated formal qualities at the expense of all other possible considerations.⁹²

In his overview of *The New Criticism* (1941), Ransom suggests that it is necessary to understand the technical mechanisms underpinning poetic practice. Ransom makes it perfectly clear that he identifies modern poetry as deficient when it comes to these vital characteristics. Ransom argues that '[t]he poets of our time have been insensitive to metrical niceties as the poets of no earlier period have been; and, for I think this follows, insensitive to the poetic function of the meters'⁹³. In Ransom's estimation, it is the theoretical contribution of the New Critics that will serve to rectify this situation. Ransom maintains that there are two key components that determine the success of a poem, and as such, its status as a worthwhile object of critical study. Firstly, there is the aforementioned idea of metrics.⁹⁴ Secondly, there is the notion of argumentation. Ransom reasons that '[t]he composition of a poem is an operation in which the argument fights to displace the meter, and the meter fights to displace the argument'.⁹⁵ According to Ransom, it is the fine balance of these two components that ensures the success of the poem, and, in turn, the poet. Ultimately, failing to adhere to the 'rules of the game'⁹⁶ entails poetic failure.

Ransom's formalist approach is completely at odds with the poetic method favored by Ford. Informed by the literary customs of Surrealism, Ford's poetic practice was

forms of skepticism. It begins by trying to derive the standard of criticism from the psychological effects of the poem and ends in impressionism and relativism'. Ibid. p.21.

⁹¹ Ransom asserts that '[u]nder these circumstances I do not see why the critic needs to do more than talk about the objective situations. The feelings will be their strict correlatives, and the pursuit of the feelings will be gratuitous', John Crowe Ransom, *The New Criticism* (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1941), p.50.

⁹² Tate argues for the importance of a strictly formal focus in 'Miss Emily' (1940): From my point of view the formal qualities of a poem are the focus of the specifically critical judgment because they partake of an objectivity that the subject matter, abstracted from the form, wholly lacks', Tate, *Essays of Four Decades*, p.149.

⁹³ Ransom, *The New Criticism*, p.254.

⁹⁴ Ransom notes that '[t]he convention of the metrical form is thought to be as old as the art itself. Perhaps it is the art itself'. Ibid. p.295.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Discussing the logical literary criticism of Yvor Winters, Ransom notes that '[t]he novel thing here is his emphasis, at the very start of a poetic theory, upon the way these perceptions are forced out of the poet's sensibility by technique, *by the rules of the game he is playing*'. Ibid. p.218. Emphasis added.

concerned with the investigation of subjectivity (rather than objectivity).⁹⁷ The staunchly formalist approach favored by the New Critics could never have taken into account a poet whose work is so heavily informed by notions – and expressions – of personality (as discussed in chapter two). Ransom admitted as much to Ford in a letter dated 25 March 1939:

I think you have a lot of stuff, and that your strategy is bad, your technique is not developed, if it is true you feel it is impossible to be consecutive and distinguished too. You are the logical end to which modern tendencies come. I am sure of that. I am for the modern tendencies and feel badly when they come to their dead end.⁹⁸

Ransom's letter is unequivocal and hints at the significant conceptual distance between Ford and the New Critics. Ransom's criticism of Ford's poetic 'strategy' is especially pertinent. In *The New Criticism*, Ransom argues that '[t]he proof of the bad strategy is in our failure to follow the poem; it is argument that we have to follow'.⁹⁹ Read in relation to the above letter, it is clear that Ransom was criticizing Ford's commitment to a formally inconsistent poetic approach that does not necessarily depend on predetermined notions of metre and argumentation.

By the same token, we get a clearer sense of the irreparable division between Charles Henri and the culturally dominant New Critics in Ford's 'From a Record of Myself' (1948). Ford's self-report reads as a statement of poetic intent and as a rebuke to Ransom:

Some new poems: outrageous, ironic, incomprehensible, surrealist, comic, confusing, violent – go to extremes never reached before (in my work). Enough of compromise (with communicability – if I read again soon that the artist's job is to "communicate" I'll vomit) and meeting people halfway – if

⁹⁷ It should also be pointed out that the New Critics took an unsurprisingly dim view of Surrealism. Consider the following extract in Tate's 'The Angelic Imagination' (1951): 'The obscurity of Poe's poetic diction is rather vagueness than the obscurity of complexity; it reflects his uncertain grasp of the relation to language to feeling, and of feeling to nature. But it is never that idolatrous dissolution of language from the grammar of a possible world, which results from the belief that language itself can be reality, or by incantation can create a reality: a superstition that comes down in French from Lautréamont, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé to the Surrealists, and in English to Hart Crane, Wallace Stevens, and Dylan Thomas', Tate, *Essays of Four Decades*, p.406.

⁹⁸ John Crowe Ransom to Charles Henri Ford, 25 March 1939. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 14, Folder 5. Nb. Ransom's letter explains the reasoning behind his decision not to publish Ford's 'The Overturned Lake' in *The Kenyon Review*.

⁹⁹ Ransom, *The New Criticism*, p.271.

they're too lazy or stupid to come all the way, let them stay where they are... Tap new sources of inspiration – both from the unconscious and in my conscious purpose of going to emotional and intellectual extremes.¹⁰⁰

Here Ford is openly rejecting the notion of the finely wrought poetic balance – or 'compromise' – between meter and argumentation favored by Ransom and the New Critics. Reading on, it is apparent that Ford's rejection of New Criticism is not merely confined to differing opinions concerning poetic balance and conceptual compromise. Ridiculing the idea of achieving impersonality in the construction – or consideration – of literary texts, Ford emphasizes his aspiration 'to make an object that has complex but real effect when it comes in contact with a sensitive being – i.e., a being sensitive to poetry'.¹⁰¹ In contrast to the detached and rational formalism of the New Critics, Ford's poetic aspiration depended upon provoking an emotional response in a suitably receptive reader. In this way, Ford's approach can be differentiated from that of the New Critics. In his interpretation, the poem is not an autonomous, self-contained and sealed text: instead it is a porous text that actively encourages the engagement of its audience.

Similarly, Ford's conceptualization of poetic composition was diametrically opposed to the game playing and 'rule' observing New Critics:

As the rules of poetry being similar to the rules of a game, there is this difference: every poem is an original rather than a traditional. Form invents new "rules" – or better, the rules are not invented in advance but seem to be created as the poem forms itself. In this sense "rules" are not really rules but rather are self-created laws – created form – perhaps even identical with – the sense of form.¹⁰²

In this passage, Ford alludes to Ransom's previously cited introduction to *The New Criticism*. Ford's conception of the self-created form could not be further from the characteristics demanded by the New Criticism. Indeed, elsewhere Ford emphatically articulates his position: 'Form will merely be the construction – very near to style but not identical. Style is the manner in which the poetry is put: much closer to the poet's

¹⁰⁰ Charles Henri Ford, 'From a Record of Myself' [1948], p.79. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box, 5, Folder 3.

¹⁰¹ Ford, 'From a Record of Myself', p.97.

¹⁰² Ibid. p.139.

personality than the mere accidental and impersonal thing called form'¹⁰³. There are several things of note in this extract. Firstly, we once again encounter personality as an integral influence within Ford's poetics. Furthermore, this quotation from Ford effectively inverts the New Criticism. That is to say, in Ford's estimation, form is an incidental byproduct of personal expression.

Significantly, these quotations related to the New Criticism all appear within the section of Ford's record entitled 'A Course of Poetry'. Comprised of numerous sections – including a section entitled 'Fortunately For You, Young Poet' – Ford's course is intended for the younger writer 'living halfway between achievement and expectation'.¹⁰⁴ Beyond offering practical advice in this sadly unpublished volume, Ford later played to host to a number of younger American poets in his *Little Anthology of the Poem in Prose* (1953). Appearing in James Laughlin's yearly *New Directions*, Ford's *Prose Poem* anthology was initially conceived as a collection of 'texts sacred and secular, ancient and modern' – and 'a dynamic alliance of the spiritual and aesthetic'.¹⁰⁵ In Ford's historically diverse anthology, not only do the writings of William Shakespeare and Franz Schubert sit side-by-side; they do so alongside the 'Two Meditations' of the first-generation New York School poet James Schuyler. In a similar fashion, Allen Ginsberg's 'Psalm' sits in close proximity to the 'Proverbs' of Paul Goodman, with 'The Folding Up' of the prophet Mohammed sandwiched in-between.

In the context of the current discussion, Ford's *Prose Poem* anthology is important for two reasons. Firstly, it is important as it can be read as an explicit rebuke to the New Critics. Ford's anthology deliberately shifts the focus away from formalistic considerations. As Parker Tyler notes in the introduction to the collection, Ford's editorial process paid scant regard to notions of poetic form. Tyler points out that Ford thought of the *Prose Poem* anthology as an 'unswerving guide to the possibilities of revaluing the poetic act. Viewing timeliness so keenly, he felt it a radical act to wield editorial option over pages devoid of all but casual (and unintended) rhymes'.¹⁰⁶ In this respect, it is clear

¹⁰³ Ibid. p.140.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p.139.

¹⁰⁵ Charles Henri Ford, 'The Poem in Prose' [undated], unpaginated. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box, 4, Folder 6.

¹⁰⁶ Parker Tyler, 'Preface' [to 'A Little Anthology of the Poem in Prose'], James Laughlin (ed.), *New Directions XIV* (London: Peter Owen, 1953), p.330.

that the 'casual' and 'untended' rhymes and forms *Prose Poem* anthology has little in common with the technical poetic concerns of the New Critics.

Secondly, beyond simply rejecting the formal and impersonal preoccupations of the New Critics in his personal practice, Ford actively sought to house the voices of American poets working in an alternative vein in the *Prose Poem*.¹⁰⁷ Including emerging younger American writers such as Ginsberg, Schuyler, Ashbery, and Philip Lamantia, Ford's collection of modern poets reads as a roll call of those that would ultimately come to define *The New American Poetry* (as collated by Donald Allen in 1960). Not only can this be read as an indicator of Ford's editorial prescience, it is also characteristic of his commitment to openness and inclusivity. However, despite its contribution to the evolution of modern post-war American poetry, Ford's anthology has gone largely unnoticed, unexamined and forgotten. This situation recurs throughout Ford's career.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, it is a state of affairs that can be traced all the way back to his first – and most ambitious – attempt at engendering a lasting editorial and critical intervention: *Blues*.

¹⁰⁷ The *Prose Poem* anthology features works by a number of former *Blues* contributors: Ford, Parker Tyler, Edouard Roditi, Alfred Kreymborg and William Carlos Williams.

¹⁰⁸ Ford was certainly aware of his neglected position on the critical and historical sidelines. Writing in his journal (November 1951), he sought solace in the fact that that '[f]ashions in poetry will change—my poetry will be recognized, my name will be exalted. And so at this point in my history I must not betray my heritage to be. The words, a flesh that lives on, as spirit, after we are gone', Ford, *Water From a Bucket*, p.126-7.

Chapter Five: What Happens to a Radical Little Magazine: Understanding Charles Henri Ford's *Blues* and the Belated Renovation of Modernism

Part of my nature as a catalyst I suppose is part of my editorial propensity. One goes through phases. The story of phases can be divided into two parts. Some are phased out and some go on to other fields.¹

The task of this chapter is to contextualize Charles Henri Ford's 1929-30 *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms* in preparation for the close-readings that will follow in the next chapter. Having first discussed what happened *to* the original *Blues*, this chapter closes with a general overview of what happened *in* Ford's first modernist little magazine.

Adam McKible argues that modernist little magazines matter. In order more accurately to study the past, McKible suggests that we need to emphasize 'its difference from our present moment. Collections and anthologies cannot do this; they de-contextualize past writing and make it familiar in ways that little magazines resist'.² Peter Marks similarly argues that little magazines 'provide unrivalled contemporary documentation of such ongoing literary developments, of rivalries and collaborations, of short-lived enthusiasms and failed projects, and of rich and illuminating work of lasting value'.³ Suzanne W. Churchill (to whose discussions of periodicals and architectural renovation this chapter owes a critical debt) concurs with Marks and McKible. Churchill writes of how modernist little magazines 'framed distinct literary spaces that made new forms of poetry possible'.⁴ The format of many modernist little magazines sought to provide a forum, a literal and figural space in which numerous emerging writers could communicate with other likeminded individuals, whilst developing their own sense of literary identity.

Blues is no exception to this rule. Mark S. Morrisson's account of periodical culture is pertinent: 'Unlike individual literary works, magazines are public forums – frequently including lively correspondence pages for public discussion. They highlight the engagement of literary production with nonliterary discourse, and they often mediate the

¹ Quoted in Asako Kitaori, 'Charles Henri Ford: Catalyst Among Poets', *Rain Taxi Review of Books*.

² Adam McKible, *The Space and Place of Modernism: the Russian Revolution, Little Magazines, and New York* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.10.

³ Peter Marks, 'Making the New: Literary Periodicals and the Constructions of Modernism', *Precursors & Aftermaths: Literature in English 1914-1945* (2: 1, 2004), p.37.

⁴ Suzanne W. Churchill, *The Little Magazine 'Others' and the Renovation of Modern American Poetry* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p.10.

initial reception of an author's work'.⁵ *Blues* can certainly be described as a public literary forum: one where a number of divergent writers were able to dialogue with each other on a textual level. In addition, the later issues of *Blues* also display the sort of 'lively correspondence' that is an important component of Morrisson's account of 'nonliterary discourse'.⁶

Although we are justified in asserting that *Blues* provided a useful, 'lively' literary platform for second-generation modernist writers – the magazine has just as much – indeed, if not more – to tell us about Ford. However, the task of contextualizing the historically and critically marginalized *Blues* is not simple. The writer who dares to take Ford seriously as both an editor and poet soon realizes that there is a dearth of critical material pertaining to *Blues*. But the difficulties presupposed by the critical lacunae surrounding *Blues* are also strengths. Lacking resource to secondary critical material, the critic needs to find a fresh perspective, an alternative means with which to approach *Blues*. In keeping with the general reverse chronology of this thesis, I shall begin with a discussion of Ford's involvement with a much later exhibition that recognized his important editorial contributions to the field of modernist little magazines.

In 1981, the Brooklyn-based Franklin Furnace avant-garde art institution held a yearlong exhibition: 'The Page as Alternative Space, 1909 to 1980'. As noted in a *Flue* checklist, the multi-part⁷ exhibition was 'mounted by four outstanding guest curators who [drew] material from public and private collections, as well as from the permanent collection of Franklin Furnace'.⁸ 'The Page as Alternative Space' focused on European and American avant-garde little magazines.⁹ Ford was one of those selected by the Franklin Furnace to be an 'Alternative Space' guest curator. Selected to curate the second part of the exhibition, Ford's curatorship focused on the years between 1930 and 1949. Ford's

⁵ Mark S. Morrisson, *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception, 1905-1920* (Madison: Wisconsin UP, 2001), p.11.

⁶ As we will see in the next chapter, the 'non-literary discourse' (Morrisson) of the seventh *Blues* is particularly significant.

⁷ Divided chronologically, 'The Page as Alternative Space' exhibition was structured as follows: 1909-1929: Clive Philpot, Librarian of the Museum, MOMA; 1930-1949: Charles Henri Ford, Editor of *View* magazine, 1940-47; 1950-1959: Barbara Moore and Jon Hendricks, Backworks, NYC; 1970-1980: Ingrid Sischy, Editor of *Artforum*.

⁸ Anonymous, 'Checklist for the Page as Alternative Space, 1909-1929', *The Flue*: Volume 1, No. 2: 'Dutch Treat' (1980).

⁹ For instance, the 1909-1929 installment of the 'Alternative Space' installment featured, amongst others: *Lacerba* (Florence) 1913-1915; *Blast* (London) 1914-1915; *291* (New York) 1915-1916; *Mecano* (Leiden) 1922-1933; *Novy Lef* (Moscow) 1927-1928.

involvement in the 1981 Franklin Furnace exhibition helps us approach the long-distant *Blues*.

Late in 1980, Clive Philpot and Lynne Tillman interviewed Ford for the December issue of the *Franklin Furnace Flue* (as part of a wider accompaniment to the 'Alternative Space' exhibition). In the first half of his *Flue* interview, Ford spoke at length about his editorial and aesthetic achievements with *View*. The emphasis placed on *View* is only to be expected, given the likelihood that Ford's selection as a guest curator had much to do with to his 'outstanding' editing of *View* between 1940-47. The publication run of *View* neatly corresponds with the dates of the second part of the 'Alternative Space' exhibition apportioned to Ford. However, Ford's 1980 *Flue* interview is not merely a recitation of his achievements pertaining to *View*. In fact, Philpot and Tillman's interview has much to tell us about *Blues*.

Given the marginalized status of *Blues*, it is unsurprising that no mention of the magazine was made when Ford's selection as a guest curator of the 'Alternative Space' exhibition was announced. However, to their utmost credit, Philpot and Tillman attempt to redress this critical imbalance whilst interviewing Ford. Rather than focus solely on *View*, significant attention is paid in the latter half of the December 1980 *Flue* interview to Ford's earlier achievements as the precocious editor of the seemingly forgotten *Blues*. Tillman's line of questioning is significant. Consider Ford's response to Tillman's simple – yet adroit – recognition that a substantial number of the experimental writers that featured in *View* first appeared in *Blues*:

We were truly avant-garde—more so than I realized. And I was surprised at the repercussions. People used to praise *View*, too, beyond what my own estimation of it was... it's better known now than it was then, because the circulation was very limited and now references may be found in art books the world over.¹⁰

In order to avoid any potential confusion: the first two sentences of Ford's reply are clearly concerned with *Blues*, not *View*. In fact, *View* is contrasted unfavorably in relation to *Blues*. Ford is keen here to downplay the significance of *View*, which, as his comments clearly

¹⁰ Clive Philpot and Lynne Tillman, 'An Interview with Charles Henri Ford: When Art and Literature Come Together', *Franklin Furnace Flue*: Volume 1: No. 2 (1980), p.1.

suggest, has come to attract a level of critical respect somewhat 'beyond' his own 'estimation' of it.

As surprising as Ford's comments might initially appear, they are in fact completely consistent. Consider the following extract from his 5 November 1947 letter to Edith Sitwell: 'How happy I shall be to get back to my poetry and plays – I am appalled when I think how long I've been bothered with the magazine'.¹¹ As we can see, Ford was frankly appalled at just how much time, energy, and capital he had invested during the running of *View*. Some thirty-three years later in 1981, it would seem that the mixed feelings that Ford held about *View* in 1947 had yet still to be resolved. What is more, we can contrast Ford's conflicted personal assessment of the critical worth of *View* with the resolutely *consistent* attitude he displayed when talking about *Blues*. Here, in fact, Ford's take on *Blues* is more than merely consistent: it is extremely positive. As his *Flue* interview makes evident, Ford continued to think especially highly of *Blues* well into his old age, much more so than he seemingly did *View*.

Why might Ford continue to think so highly of his early achievements with *Blues*, a magazine significantly more obscure than the *View*? The answer has much to do with the specific sort of avant-garde production that can be found in *Blues*. One of the main differences that Ford discerned between *Blues* and *View* stemmed from what he once described as his 'pioneering mode'.¹² Significantly, Ford's remark about his 'pioneering mode' came during an exchange about the possibility of re-launching *Blues*. Ford clearly equated the opportunity for 'pioneering' aesthetic discovery with *Blues* (and not *View*).¹³ When read alongside his later comments to Philpot and Tillman, it becomes apparent that Ford's pioneering spirit was tied specifically to notions of *poetic discovery*.

¹¹ Charles Henri Ford to Edith Sitwell, 5 November 1947. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 7, Folder 10.

¹² On 14 October 1951, Ford wrote excitedly to James Laughlin that '[t]he inspiration has come to me to edit a quarterly of new poetry and call it BLUES 52...I'm in the "pioneering" mode again!... The fact that Blues 52 would be devoted exclusively to poetry, and printed as a handsome book of poetry might be, will make it attractive to the poet-contributors. It will be a future collectors' item – there's no doubt about that', Charles Henri Ford to James Laughlin, 14 October 1951. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 7, Folder 6.

¹³ Many of the (then) unknown writers that Ford published in *Blues* reappear in *View*. Edouard Roditi, Paul Bowles Lionel Abel, James T. Farrell, Kay Boyle, Louis Zukofsky, and Harold Rosenberg all feature in *View*.

During his later *Flue* interview with Philpot and Tillman, Ford makes it clear that the crucial element that defined his first little magazine was its *verbal* avant-gardism.¹⁴ The specific emphasis that Ford places on the verbal – or better: *oral* – aspect of his ‘pioneering’ *Blues* is important as it also relates to his conception of poetic sociability. In particular, the inherently *expressive* aspect of orality resonates when considered in relation to Ford’s previously discussed preference for aesthetic approaches and methods based around notions of inter-subjective exchange and *communication*. As we saw in our earlier discussion of his circular postal practices, Ford favored models of inter-subjective communication because they afforded him the opportunity to reach out and – via the construction of poetic (i.e. verbal or oral) dialogues between likeminded individuals – establish increasingly expansive networks of aesthetic exchange. In this way, Ford was able to construct something akin to an inclusive poetic *community*.

Much the same is true of *Blues*. Indeed, as we will see at the beginning of the next chapter, Ford’s first little magazine invoked the idea of community through verbal exchange. That is to say, *Blues* was conceived as a democratic, inter-subjective aesthetic environment in which a burgeoning community of individual literary voices could gather together and exchange ideas without the fear of prior judgment or censorship. At the same time, *Blues* also offered the ‘pioneering’ Ford an early opportunity to discover unknown writers and – in a move that anticipates later projects like *Spare Parts* – bring them together in newfound patterns of aesthetic equivalence. What is more, it is this notion of ‘pioneering’ that enables us to more clearly distinguish between the verbal *Blues* and the more visually orientated *View*. Unlike *Blues*, Ford’s second magazine was less concerned with the idea of ‘pioneering’ than it was with a more measured sort of aesthetic conservation.

For better or worse, *View* is mainly known these days as the magazine that offered refuge to the displaced figures of the established European avant-garde. Ford conceded to Philpot and Tillman that *View* was initially formed in order to provide a refuge for the European aesthetic intelligentsia: ‘Well, the impulse was because in 1940 many of the surrealists that I’d known in Paris were refugees in NY and had no organ, because *Minotaur*, their big thing, in Paris had stopped so I began’.¹⁵ We can here begin to more

¹⁴ Philpot and Tillman, ‘An Interview with Charles Henri Ford’, p.2.

¹⁵ Ibid. p.1.

clearly distinguish between the respective 'impulses' of *Blues* and *View*. Where *View* draws heavily – at least initially – on those aesthetic advances already made by long-established members of the European avant-garde, the impulse that underpins the almost exclusively American *Blues* seems altogether more adventurous, even *impulsive*.¹⁶ As distinct from the almost archival aspect that underwrites the original formation of *View* (in which the last vestiges of a Surrealistically-committed European avant-garde were presented with the opportunity for continued documentation and lasting preservation), the all-American *Blues* appears resolutely committed to aesthetic discovery.¹⁷

As we already know, Ford sought throughout his life to remain 'up to the minute' with contemporary cultural developments. Ford's desire to remain 'up to the minute' should be read alongside his desire to be an unconventional cultural 'scene-maker'.¹⁸ However, as we noted during our discussion of his dealings with Andy Warhol and Pop Art in the 1960s, Ford's needs – if unfulfilled – could easily spill over into personal anxiety and frustration: especially if he perceived himself to be caught betwixt and between historical achievement and contemporary advance. Lacking the requisite means with which to assert his credentials as a scene-marker, Ford's 1960s poetry is replete with anxious sideways glances toward the contemporary art world: one which shows no sign of slowing down, or even returning Ford's gaze.

I think it possible to attribute Ford's retrospective ambivalence towards *View* to a form of frustration similar to that he experienced in his conflicted cultural dealings of the

¹⁶ On a basic level, Ford's youthful exuberance and his 'pioneering' desire to discover new aesthetic forms whilst also making an immediate impression on the literary scene helps us understand the impulsive – even impatient – aspect of *Blues*. In addition, lacking any prior editorial experience, Ford had to go on his editorial nerve in the early issues of *Blues*. As a result, the initial impression we get when reading early issues of *Blues* is that Ford's continually developing project is very much a work-in-progress unfolding before our eyes.

¹⁷ I do not seek to deny the American dimension of *View*. After all, a cursory inspection of Ford's magazine reveals that entire issues of *View* were given over to American topics. This is true of the 'Americana Fantastica' (January 1943) and 'Tropical Americana' (May 1945), and 'American' (October 1945) issues of *View*. Nevertheless, it is equally important to note that a significant number of issues were devoted entirely to artists and movements that had roots in Europe. This is true of the 'Max Ernst' (April 1942), 'Yves Tanguy / Pavel Tchelitchew' (May 1942), 'Marcel Duchamp' (March 1945), 'View Italy' (February 1946), 'View Paris' (March-April 1946), and 'Surrealism in Belgium' (December 1946) issues of *View*. The Continental aspect of Ford's *View* can be contrasted to the more American dimension of *Blues*. Broadly speaking, whilst *Blues* was primarily concerned with the investigation of American aesthetics, *View* functioned as an aesthetic conduit 'through which the wider American public was introduced to surrealism, existentialism, and their sources', Catrina Neiman, 'Introduction: *View Magazine*: Transatlantic Pact', p.xiii.

¹⁸ Lynne Tillman, telephone interview with the author, 24 November 2010.

1960s. As editor of *View*, Ford had the scope in which to assert a degree of personal control over the dissemination of Surrealist aesthetics into the post-war American art world. Equally, Ford would have been afforded the ability directly to affect (via the power of editorial veto) what material was published in *View*. However, for all this, *View* remained largely indebted – one might say *shackled* – to previous (i.e. Surrealist) cultural developments: ones over which he played no sanctioned role. Nor was Ford likely to have ever been permitted such a role, given Breton's inclination towards 'gratuitous cruelty'¹⁹ and his 'hypnotic prestige – an immediate and exceptional authority – which he used with insufficient care and without real discretion'.²⁰

Ford is evidently delighted when the interview in the *Flue* turns to *Blues*. His earlier ambivalence about his personal 'estimation' of *View* falls away as he discusses *Blues*. Ford's pride at the literary discoveries made in *Blues* is as obvious as it is striking:

Most of my literary discoveries were in *Blues*, I was the first to publish Paul Bowles, Edouard Roditi, Harold Rosenberg, Kenneth Rexroth, James T. Farrell, he was a 19-year-old-student at the University of Chicago. I published his first short story and then I passed him on to *transition*; he was published there subsequently, a piece called "Calico Shoes," one of his stories which became famous. Oh, then there was Erskine Caldwell. Erskine Caldwell was another of *Blues*' 'first magazine' publication. Can you believe it? Farrell, Caldwell and Bowles... not to mention Kay Boyle!²¹

Notice the exuberant tone of Ford's recollection about his early career as a little magazine editor. Clearly, the fifty-year interim between the initial publication of *Blues* and the *Flue* interview has not diminished the significance of earlier editorial 'discoveries' and achievements, at least in Ford's mind. In addition, notice how keen Ford is to stress that these really were *his* discoveries. Ford's 'discovery' of James T. Farrell and bringing him to the attention of Eugene Jolas's *transition* is a case in point. Ford's recollections assume the quality of benevolent paternalism. Ford implies that he discovered and nurtured Farrell's precocious literary talent (notice the emphasis placed on Farrell's youth in the passage: despite his age being roughly approximate to that of Ford), before passing his charge on his way to no less a magazine than *transition*. The obvious implication here is that *Blues*

¹⁹ Ruth Brandon, *Surreal Lives: The Surrealists, 1917-1945* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p.436.

²⁰ Georges Bataille, *The Absence of Myth: Writings on Surrealism* (London: Verso, 2006), p.31.

²¹ Philpot and Tillman, 'An Interview with Charles Henri Ford', p.2.

(and by proxy: Ford) sowed the seeds of Farrell's later, more famous work.²² Ford's proud musings about *Blues* can be contrasted to his altogether more defensive statements (i.e. those made to Allan Frame) discussing, say, his involvement with Warhol. Clearly, the depth of Ford's emotional – and *aesthetic* – investment stemming from his formative *Blues* experiences and discoveries was both long lasting and profound.²³

However, it is important to note that Ford's *Flue* comments – made fifty years after *Blues* folded – benefit from substantial critical hindsight and lengthy personal reflection. Such luxuries were not afforded Ford at the time of his initial *Blues* advances and discoveries. Ford's pioneering mode posed many a problem for *Blues*. The speed at which the original *Blues* unfurled meant that Ford had hardly any time with which to catch his critical breath.²⁴ Consider the highly compressed timeline of *Blues*. Ford edited seven issues (the seventh being a quarterly) of *Blues* in 1929 in quick succession from the geographically remote address of 227-228 Gilmer Building, Columbus, Mississippi. There then followed a pause in the publishing of *Blues* whilst Ford visited New York in January 1930. Ford then returned to Mississippi, where he resumed editing *Blues*. Having secured patronage for his magazine whilst in New York, two more quarterly numbers of *Blues* appeared: published at 12 East 15th Street, NYC.

Modernist little magazine theory helps us better understand what happened during the brisk history of Ford's *Blues*. In his study of six periodical editors, Ian Hamilton argues that ten years is the ideal lifespan for a little magazine. 'Within that span,' argues Hamilton, 'one can discern a pattern. There are the opening years of jaunty, assertive indecision, then a middle period of genuine identity, and after that a kind of level stage in

²² I do not seek to dispute the veracity of Ford's recollections. Rather, I cite Ford's retrospective musings in order to emphasize the confident and consistent tone that Ford adopted whenever pressed on the topic of *Blues*.

²³ For instance, consider the following assertion in relation to *Blues*: 'Part of my nature as a catalyst I suppose is part of my editorial propensity. One goes through phases. The story of phases can be divided into two parts. Some are phased out and some go on to other fields' (Ford). *Blues* might well have been a 'phase' – an early, formative one – but it is never *phased* out: rather, it *persists*. We can oppose the continuity of Ford's *Blues* impulse with that of *View*. *View* was a magazine that outlasted itself in Ford's estimation. In this respect, we might say that *View* represented a passing phase in Ford's career. In marked contrast, Ford's interest in *Blues* was an active one that persisted throughout his adult life and culminated with the publication of the 1989 *Unmuzzled OX Blues*.

²⁴ Ford admitted as much to Philpot and Tillman in 1981: 'That's how you do it! At that time I didn't realize how avant garde *Blues* was and it's become historical also', Philpot and Tillman, 'An Interview with Charles Henri Ford', p.2.

which that identity becomes more and more wan and mechanical'.²⁵ If we follow Hamilton's temporal schema, the premature collapse of the 'jaunty, assertive' *Blues* need not be viewed negatively. Indeed, the relative brevity and premature collapse of *Blues* whilst still in the first flush of youth prevented it from falling into the typical trap of little magazines as charted by Hamilton.

At the same time, the pace at which *Blues* emerged, burned, and, ultimately, faded from public view, had problematic consequences for any potential readership of his magazine. Ford might well have wanted *Blues* to remain protean, ambiguous, and uncodified, but this approach had significant drawbacks. To all intents and purposes, Ford's inability (caused by haste) or unwillingness (by design) to issue his magazine with an accompanying literary program (see chapter two) denied the wider literary public a framework with which to understand *Blues*.²⁶ Thus, what Frederick J. Hoffman – in his canonical study of modernist little magazines – retrospectively describes as the 'self-conscious, enthusiastic, and daring'²⁷ experimentalism of *Blues* ran the risk of appearing formally and conceptually scattered, catholic, and indecisive to a contemporary audience.

However, recent archival research affords us critical insight into the editorial decision-making process behind *Blues*. Parker Tyler typed an unpublished 'Program', on behalf of the editorial board of *Blues*. As we can see, Ford and Tyler's co-authored *Blues* 'Program' was somewhat late in arriving:

Since a program may begin in the middle of things, this, in a sense, is true of *Blues*' program. We are going to commit ourselves about certain things which, to let alone any longer would be to present as permissible.²⁸

As the opening line of the *Blues* 'Program' makes clear, it is a manifesto that is being written *in media res*. Ford envisaged the 'Program' as the opening piece of a version of

²⁵ Ian Hamilton, *The Little Magazines: A Study of Six Editors* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), p.9.

²⁶ Some of Ford's more astute contemporary critics did not need a guide in order to appreciate *Blues*: 'Of all the little magazines which as Gertrude Stein loves to quote, have died to make verse free, perhaps the youngest and freshest was the *Blues*. Its editor Charles Henri Ford has come to Paris and he is young and fresh as his *Blues* and also honest which also is a pleasure. Gertrude Stein thinks that he and Robert Coates alone among the young men have an individual sense of words', Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p.260.

²⁷ Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, Carolyn F. Ulrich, *The Little Magazine: A History and Bibliography* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1947), p. 290.

²⁸ Parker Tyler, 'Program' [undated]. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 3, Box, 19, Folder 3. p.1.

tenth *Blues* that never came to fruition.²⁹ The tone of the opening gambit of the 'Program' is significant. It appears as if Ford has been stung into action, forced to commit himself 'about certain things which, to let any longer would be to present as permissible'.³⁰ Only now, after nine issues of *Blues* have already entered into the public literary domain, does Ford feel the need to 'commit' his magazine to 'certain things'. The opening lines of the 'Program' certainly suggest a process of editorial decision-making that, rather than being characterized by a 'jaunty' assertiveness, seems altogether more defensive, even uncertain. Why does Ford feel to need to commission Tyler to type a program in defense of *Blues*? Where before

the time to speak had not yet come – there has been growing in all directions a curious plant of opinion and trend, criteria and predilection, of which *Blues* may be easily conceived to be a name. It is to contradict such a superstitious conception that this program has been formed.³¹

Couched in Tyler's characteristically oblique language, the above extract also hints at why Ford felt the need to append a 'Program' to his tenth *Blues*. The unpublished 'Program' was intended to counteract the 'great deal of nonsense' that had been 'expressed about *Blues* in the pulpy mouths of various licensed literary bushrangers, identifying themselves, for the moment, as more or less literary commentators'.³²

The unpublished 'Program' makes clear that, initially, 'Blues had not deemed it necessary to offer a protest in [sic] behalf of its rightful constituents'³³. By 1931, however, it would seem that the situation had changed. Ford felt compelled to issue a response '[t]oward this simply wasteful, time- and energy-wasting'³⁴ literary criticism that was directed at *Blues*. Whilst it remains unpublished, Ford and Tyler's co-authored 'Program' has much to tell about *Blues*. In our earlier discussion of Ford's circular poetics (see

²⁹ There is an advert in Lincoln Kirstein and Varian Fry's Harvard-based *Hound and Horn* (January – March 1931) announcing a tenth *Blues*. This 1930s version of a tenth edition *Blues* was to feature the work of Djuna Barnes, Gorham Munson, Stein, and others. In hindsight, we know that it would take a little longer for a version of a tenth *Blues* to eventually appear. See Charles Henri Ford, *Scrapbook: 1928-1931*, unpaginated. Beinecke. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Oversize, Box 6, Folder 327.

³⁰ Tyler, 'Program', p.1,

³¹ Ibid. p.1.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

chapter two), we suggested that one of the reasons why Ford chose not to include a literary manifesto or program in *Blues* stemmed from his desire to differentiate his praxis from that of his modernist elders. In that chapter, we noted that one of the main reasons underpinning Ford's decision to publish *Blues* without an accompanying program stemmed from his desire to differentiate his youthful venture from Ezra Pound's more established – and, by the late 1920s, certainly more programmatic – brand of literary modernism. As we saw, a major point of contention between Pound and Ford arose from the former's belief that a codified literary program should accompany *Blues*. Faced with an important decision about the direction that *Blues* was to take, Ford chose to disregard Pound's advice about literary programs.

Retrospectively, it seems that Ford's decision to ignore Pound's suggestion to write a literary program backfired. Ford rejected Pound's advice because he wanted to assert his editorial and aesthetic autonomy. But his youthful impetuosity helped create the conditions under which the slights of 'various licensed literary bushrangers' were able to flourish. With no literary program to guide them – or with which to assuage their doubts about Ford's daring blend of literary experimentation – many contemporary commentators simply did not know critically to respond to *Blues*. And, as any cursory glance at the contemporary responses to the original run of *Blues* shows, a number of 'licensed literary bushrangers' leapt at the opportunity to pour scorn upon Ford's little magazine. Sometime – as in *The Literary Lantern* of 30 December 1928 – such resistance displayed regional prejudice: 'Literature seems to spread like infection. At any rate, no sooner have we become used to unwanted activities in Alabama, then we find Mississippi stirring'.³⁵

Other contemporary critics sought to criticize the experimental nature of *Blues*. For instance, Donald Davidson attacked Ford's magazine for repeating 'the vices and [having] none of the virtues of the forward and experimentalist cults that wax and sicken on the

³⁵ Anonymous review of *Blues*, *The Literary Lantern*, 20 December 1928. Quoted in Charles Henri Ford, *Scrapbook: 1928-1931*, unpaginated. The language in which this fearful, knee-jerk critical reaction is delivered is revealing. In particular, notice the emphasis placed on the specifically *American* aspect of the apparent literary infection spreading via the pages of magazines like *Blues*. We will consider the theoretical implications of the 'American' dimension of Ford's first little magazine in the close readings in the next chapter of this thesis.

banks of the Seine and the Hudson'.³⁶ Davidson's dismissal of *Blues* is perhaps closer to the mark than he realized: a curious, hybridized mixture of local, cosmopolitan, and international experimental literature does feature in Ford's magazine. However, Davidson lacks the critical knowledge and vocabulary to appreciate *Blues*: information that an introductory literary program to Ford's magazine could have provided. Lacking such resources, Ford's magazine strikes Davidson as 'mysterious and odd'³⁷ – all the more since the resolutely urbane *Blues* hails from Mississippi. Davidson's prejudices are typical of those others who deigned to discuss *Blues*. Writing in the New York-based *The Nation* on 17 April 1929, James Rorty similarly suggests that *Blues* is merely 'a potpourri of badly dated modernistic attitudes and techniques with an underlying arrivist [sic] psychology'.³⁸ Rorty dismisses *Blues* as a mismatched collection of miscellanea. However, nothing could be further from the truth. As my readings of the original nine *Blues* will demonstrate, Ford's magazine is carefully and consciously constructed. Each number contributes to the overarching trajectory of *Blues*: a general arc that – as I will more fully articulate – centers upon issues of poetic *renovation*.

As Ford and Tyler's remarkably candid essay ('What Happens to a Radical Literary Magazine') in *The Sewanee Review* (January 1931) makes clear, cultural renovation was a driving force behind *Blues*:

No doubt, some perfectly worthless stuff got in: it was not, at first, our intention to publish blueribbon literature. The general tendency in taste was certainly toward the significant in legitimate new literary modes. But the important thing to be considered is the fate which must befall any attempt at cultural renovation (we prefer the word to *revolution*), for each attempt has the partially secret but wholly venomous antipathy of the lords of cultural destiny.³⁹

Notice the distinction Ford and Tyler make between renovation and revolution. Ford and Tyler are clearly suggesting that *Blues* was characterized by the former tendency:

³⁶ Donald Davidson, 'Untitled Review', *Tennessean*, 3 March 1929. Quoted in Charles Henri Ford, *Scrapbook: 1928-1931*, unpaginated.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ James Rorty, 'Untitled Review', *The Nation*, 17 April 1929. Quoted in Charles Henri Ford, *Scrapbook: 1928-1931*, unpaginated.

³⁹ Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, 'What Happens to a Radical Literary Magazine', *The Sewanee Review* (January 1931), p.64.

renovation. This distinction between revolutionary rupture and more tempered cultural renovation is of fundamental importance when attempting to understand *Blues*. It is only by considering the role renovation plays in *Blues* that we are actually able to understand the original nine issues of Ford's modernist little magazine.

However, given that Ford and Tyler place great emphasis on cultural renovation in *The Sewanee Review* piece about *Blues*, it does seem surprising that early advertisements for the magazine would choose to describe the periodical as one of 'A MORE COMPLETE REVOLT'.⁴⁰ Following the trajectory of *Blues* as it develops, this revolutionary rhetoric ultimately dissipates to reveal something more finely wrought. In order better to appreciate why Ford's dalliance with the rhetoric of (literary) revolution proved so short-lived, we need to differentiate between the aims of *Blues* and those of the contemporary modernist little magazine to which it was most often compared: Eugene Jolas's Paris-based *transition* (1927-38). In the words of Dougald McMillan, '*transition* was the most important of the American expatriate 'little' magazines. For Americans at home (and for a smaller number of English intellectuals) it came to stand for all that was new in contemporary writing'.⁴¹ Jolas's magazine occupies an importance position in the history of 20th century avant-garde literature. According to McMillan, '[i]t was *transition* that proclaimed the poet's right to more direct presentation of the unconscious, greater linguistic experimentation, and freer development of personal mythic structures'.⁴² In addition, '[i]t was primarily *transition* that re-established the importance of 'the word' which had suffered so much in the exaltation of the image in the first quarter of the century'.⁴³

Jolas's attempted realignment of 'the word' in the second quarter of the 20th century took place against a backdrop of staunch literary radicalism. As is well known, Jolas sought to bring about a 'revolution of the word' through the pages of *transition*. Originally appearing in the June 1929 double issue of *transition*, the famous 'Revolution of

⁴⁰ Quoted in Charles Henri Ford, *I Will Be What I Am*, Charles Henri Ford Papers, HRC, p.119. A number of the early advertisements for *Blues* reveal a stereotypical adolescent fondness for idealistic forms of literary rhetoric of a decidedly revolutionary persuasion.

⁴¹ Dougald McMillan, *transition: the History of a Literary Era, 1927-1938* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1975), p.1.

⁴² McMillan, *transition*, p.3.

⁴³ Ibid. p.3. Jolas's desire to re-established the verbal component of avant-garde experimentation also brings to mind Ford's personal preference for specific sorts of *poetic* discovery.

the Word Proclamation' attacked the tired 'spectacle of short stories, novels, poems, and plays still under the hegemony of the banal word, monotonous syntax, static psychology, [and] descriptive Naturalism'.⁴⁴ Co-signed by contributors including Kay Boyle, Harry Crosby, Harold J. Salmeson, and Laurence Vail (all of whom also contributed to *Blues*), the 'Proclamation' declared that it was the writer's 'right to use words of his own fashioning and to disregard existing grammatical and syntactical laws'.⁴⁵ Weighted firmly in the favor of untrammelled artistic expression, the 'Proclamation' closed with the defiant suggestion that '[t]he plain reader be damned'.⁴⁶ In this respect, the 'Revolution of the Word Proclamation' typified the heady mix of uncompromising aesthetics and radical posturing that became the trademark of *transition*.⁴⁷

Whilst it is difficult to say with any degree of certainty whether Ford was consciously mimicking the characteristically radical rhetoric of Jolas's cosmopolitan periodical in the early announcements for *Blues*,⁴⁸ the fact remains that many contemporary critics often saw fit to equate his Mississippi-based magazine of 'new rhythms' with the more high prolife *transition*.⁴⁹ Furthermore, a number of these contemporary critical comparisons were decidedly uncharitable.⁵⁰ Take Donald Davidson's account of the inaugural issue of *Blues* (February 1929): 'The poets glibly

⁴⁴ Eugene Jolas, *Critical Writings, 1924-1951* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2009), p.111.

⁴⁵ Jolas, *Critical Writings*, p.111.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p.112.

⁴⁷ At the same time, it is important to note that the 'Revolution of the Word Proclamation' was by no means the first radically orientated document to appear in the pages of *transition*. For instance, Jolas's earlier 'On the Quest' (December 1927) sought to 'reject the insinuation that any political affiliation whatever can master us. The question at stake in this respect is bigger than all the ephemeral solutions of history. We are for the reestablishment of liberty in its deepest sense', Jolas, *Critical Writings*, p.247.

⁴⁸ In his late interview with Allen Frame, Ford was happy to admit that *transition* was an early source of literary inspiration. However, I have yet to find any documentary evidence suggesting that Ford was directly inspired by the radical rhetoric of *transition*.

⁴⁹ 'The Plight of Young Writers' (1929), Edward W. Titus describes 'two magazines, one published in Paris and given over to programs.... no, programs, – manifestos, symposia, revolutions and obsessions, and another printed far away in the Middle West of the United States, that had the laudable intention of finding new American rhythms. One or two of the editors of the Paris magazine are represented on the advisory board of the middle western magazine, whose revolted editors, in turn, appear not infrequently in the Paris magazine', Edward W. Titus, 'The Plight of Young Writers', *This Quarter* (2: 2, October-December 1929), pp.189-90. Whilst Titus does not name the magazines in question, it is clear that his is talking about *transition* and *Blues* (incorrectly described here as a magazine of the Middle West). Titus is also alluding to the fact that Jolas briefly served on the editorial board of *Blues*.

⁵⁰ Consider Harry Hansen's comparison between the trend-setting *transition* and the later *Blues*. Hansen argues that '[a]t least "transition" established leadership in this revolution, and although *Blues* and other journals are about to follow suit, it is still the bulkiest and the most controversial of the new magazines', Harry Hansen, 'Untitled Review', *NY World*, 13 March 1929. Quoted in Charles Henri Ford, *Scrapbook: 1928-1931*, unpaginated.

mention the unmentionables in imitation—Dial—New Masses—Transition verse. Their diction reeks pleasantly of underwear, nudes, blood, complexes, and E.E. Cummings' acrobatic punctuation'.⁵¹ In particular, consider Davidson's assertion that the contributors to *Blues* 'glibly' offer up examples of imitative verse. Davidson is effectively dismissing Ford's magazine as a mere stylistic imitator of more prominent modernist little magazines like *transition*⁵².

Ford's decision to temper the early radical rhetoric of his little magazine can be read as a partial response to such accusations of imitation. Ford did not want to be seen as a mere imitator. More specifically, he did not want his magazine to be considered a mere imitation of *transition*. In this respect, Ford's tempering of his rhetoric can be understood as an attempt to differentiate between *transition* and *Blues*. This is where Ford and Tyler's distinction between outright revolution and more modest cultural renovation comes into play. *The Sewanee Review* article hints at a conversation between *transition* and *Blues*: with Ford slyly hinting that literature needs to be renovated or refurbished in contrast with the revolutionary rhetoric underpinning Jolas's project. In order better to appreciate the origins of this renovation, it is important to remember when *Blues* was originally published: 1929. Why attach such significance to this particular year? The answer has much to do with one of the more recalcitrant contributors to Ford's *Blues*: Laura Riding.⁵³

Laura Riding collaborated with Robert Graves on *A Survey of Modernist Poetry* in 1927. Riding and Graves's *Survey* is an important literary document. Riding and Graves were amongst the very first writers to deploy the term 'modernist' in a specifically descriptive, classificatory manner. Riding and Graves assert that '[t]he principle value of a new method is that it can act as a strong deterrent against writing in a worn out style'.⁵⁴ According to Riding and Graves, modernist poetry is, if nothing else, 'an ironic criticism of

⁵¹ Donald Davidson, 'Untitled Review', *Tennessean*, 3 March 1929. Quoted in Charles Henri Ford, *Scrapbook: 1928-1931*, unpaginated.

⁵² Davidson's review also captures the sense of widespread critical confusion caused by the arrival of *Blues*: 'Being without information other than the magazine's contents, I hesitate to offer an opinion as to whether "Blues" is a student prank; or the project of some exile from Greenwich Village, come down to winter in the South and subject the Mississippians to his civilizing influence; or the effect of some native brother who has returned from a season among the North and is now consorting to act as a sort of local Messiah'. Ibid. Quoted in Charles Henri Ford, *Scrapbook: 1928-1931*, unpaginated.

⁵³ Riding's 'What Is There To Believe In' appeared in the ninth *Blues* (Spring 1930).

⁵⁴ Laura Riding and Robert Graves, *A Survey of Modernist Poetry and A Pamphlet Against Anthologies* (Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 2002), p.11

false literary survivals'.⁵⁵ Matters are more complicated in Riding and Graves's *Survey* than they might first appear. Riding and Graves have reservations about the supposed merits of modernist poetry. They make this clear in the concluding section of their retrospective *Survey*:

There has been, we see, a short and very concentrated period of carefully disciplined and self-conscious poetry. It has been followed by a pause in which no poetry of any certainty is appearing at all, an embarrassed pause after an arduous and erudite stock-taking. The next stage is not clear. But it is not impossible that there will be a resumption of less eccentric, less strained, more critically unconscious poetry, purified however by this experience of historical effort.⁵⁶

Riding and Graves seek to sound the final death-knell for modernist poetry in the above passage. Whilst happy to admit that there was 'a short and very concentrated period of carefully disciplined and self-conscious poetry' up until 1927, Riding and Graves also go to great lengths in order to demonstrate that the moment for 'modernist' (i.e. avant-garde) poetic experimentation has passed:

In the period just passing no new era was begun. A climax was merely reached in criticism by a combination of sophistication and a desire for a new enlightened primitiveness. Wherever attempts at sheer newness in poetry were made they merely ended in dead movements.⁵⁷

The more conservative critical tendencies of Riding and Graves are highlighted in this extract. They are dismissive of those writers who display a predilection for an uncritical, 'sheer newness' and superficial experimentalism. Whilst Riding and Graves are at least willing (begrudgingly) to defend the experiments of E.E. Cummings against those who would label him 'freakish and obscure because of his typography',⁵⁸ they are clearly more comfortable with a writer like John Crowe Ransom, who, without being sensationalist, 'has a colloquial dignity and grace which it is possible to call Southern and a quality in his poetry that is definitely aristocratic'.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Riding and Graves, *Survey of Modernist Poetry*, p.53.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p.132.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p.132.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p.40.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.48.

Though biased, Riding and Graves's extended praising of Ransom is understandable. Riding had links with the Nashville, Tennessee-based 'Fugitive' group of which Ransom was a prominent member. In addition, we already know that the founding editor of *The Kenyon Review* once dismissed Ford's poetry in language that is reminiscent of Riding and Graves. As we noted in the previous chapter, Ransom told Ford that '[y]ou are the logical end to which modern tendencies come. I am sure of that. I am for the modern tendencies and feel badly when they come to their dead end'.⁶⁰ I am less interested here in Ransom's New Critical denigration of Ford's individual style and technique, than I am in the language with which he chooses to express his barely concealed animosity. Especially since Ransom's criticism of Ford's late 1930s poetry (epitomized in 'The Garden of Disorder') could almost have been lifted verbatim from Riding and Graves's earlier *Survey*.

Ransom's critique of Ford's poetic 'technique' can be traced back to Riding and Graves's abhorrence of 'sheer newness'. Indeed, Ransom implies as much in a letter to Ford: 'I covet a certain mellowness like the homogenous taste of a wine; I am repelled by rawness, or what I have called violence; and I have the pious hope that the mellowness doesn't make impossible the strength, the power'.⁶¹ Like his literary associate Riding, Ransom has a number of reservations – even outright fears – about those poetic tendencies that he broadly groups together as 'modern'. By his own admission, Ransom is 'repelled' by literary 'rawness' and much prefers 'a certain mellowness' not far removed from what Riding and Graves describe as a 'purified' poetry: one that is 'less eccentric, less strained, [and] more critically unconscious'. Similarly, notice how Ransom's admonishment of Ford mirrors that of Riding and Graves: 'I am for the modern tendencies and feel badly when they come to their dead end'. It is impossible to know whether Ransom was being completely sincere when he wrote to Ford of his apparent regret that 'modern tendencies' come to their supposed 'logical' – and deathly – conclusion. Of more importance is the fact that Ransom's comments are part of a more general trend of literary criticism (beginning in the 1920s) that sought –prematurely, as we shall see – to declare literary experimentalism either outmoded or finished.

⁶⁰ John Crowe Ransom to Charles Henri Ford, 25 March 1939. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 14, Folder 5.

⁶¹ John Crowe Ransom to Charles Henri Ford, 1 December 1939. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 14, Folder 5.

Joseph Vogel's comments in his polemical piece 'Literary Graveyards' are similarly indicative of the anti-experimentalist turn during the late 1920s. In the October 1929 issue of *New Masses*, Vogel declares that 'it is time that young writers dissociate themselves from all these abstractions, as many have long ago done from Pound, the dean of corpses that promenaded in graveyards.'⁶² Vogel castigates what he perceives to be an increasingly watered-down literary experimentation in a younger generation of little magazines.⁶³ Significantly, it is *Blues* that bears the brunt of Vogel's polemic: '*Blues* for instance, has persistently avoided life and human beings. The work in it has been metaphysical, treating with petty emotions, describing souls of lousy poets'.⁶⁴ These are strong words, which would have come as a surprise to Ford. All the more so, bearing in mind that Vogel had been such a prominent early advocate of *Blues*: one who was more than happy to make contact with prominent modernists (like Ezra Pound), and who also sought to generate interest and support in Ford's venture on behalf of its geographically isolated editor. Ford appointed Vogel to the editorial board of *Blues*. But as the October 1929 appearance of his 'Literary Graveyards' suggests, Vogel's enthusiasm for *Blues* soon faded.⁶⁵ However, it is important to note that Vogel knowingly misrepresents *Blues* in his *New Masses* broadside. As an associate editor of *Blues*, Vogel had resource to a privileged vantage point that would have allowed him to appreciate how Ford's magazine could – at any given moment – be metaphysically, experimentally or socially inclined. This flexible, inclusive aspect of *Blues* accounts for, say, the positioning of Kathleen Tankersley Young's more properly metaphysical poetic reveries alongside the socially conscious prose of William Closson Emory (in the third *Blues*).

Vogel's 'Literary Graveyards' makes no mention of the inclusive flexibility that characterizes *Blues*. Instead, Vogel merely complains that, in order for a writer to get his

⁶² Joseph Vogel, 'Literary Graveyards' *New Masses* (October 1929), p.30.

⁶³ Vogel can also be added to the list of contemporary critics who unfavorably linked *transition* and *Blues*: 'One of the dropping Pound left is transition. And the harm transition has done is evidenced in a contagion about to spread in this country, in the form of a crop of new magazines, which will appear in the near future. Blues appeared months ago, a washy imitation of its mama in Paris', Vogel, 'Literary Graveyards', p.30.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.30.

⁶⁵ The origins of Vogel's attack on *Blues* and Ford can be traced back to what the former writer saw as the latter's act of editorial inference. Vogel took umbrage at Ford's decision to alter the punctuation of James T. Farrell's short-story 'Slob'. For more on Vogel's turn away from *Blues*, see Douglas Wixon, *Worker-Writer in America: Jack Conroy and the Tradition of Midwestern Literary Radicalism, 1898-1990* (Chicago: Illinois UP, 1990), p.180.

work published, 'let us say in *Blues*, he must drop commas, sense, and adopt freakishness'.⁶⁶ Our later readings of *Blues* aim to demonstrate that Vogel's assertion is far from accurate. However, for the time being, notice how easy it would be to mistake Vogel's language for that of Riding and Graves. In such moments, it seems as if Vogel is adopting the language of Riding and Graves's *Survey* in order to strengthen his critical case against little magazines like *Blues*. I mention such a possibility to illustrate just how prevalent the festering sense of anti-experimentalism (irrespective of individual political or literary leaning) was during the era in which Ford's *Blues* first emerged.

Of course, the simple fact remains that no amount of constant – or as Tyler puts it when typing the 'Program': 'predictable' – contemporary chattering about 'freakiness', 'dead ends', and 'literary graveyards' dissuaded Ford from his attempt to carve out a poetic niche for both himself and *Blues*. If anything, Ford took great delight in provoking those who would set out to denigrate *Blues*. For example, Ford's relabeling of *Blues* as a 'Bi-Sexual Bi-Monthly' in response to sniping about his personal sexual preferences is indicative of his occasionally combative – and certainly consistently witty – editorial sensibility. In this instance, Ford turns accusations of alleged abnormality and 'freakiness' to his advantage. What is more, associate editors of *Blues* like Tyler and Kathleen Tankersley Young shared Ford's provocative sensibility:

I love to sling these things in the face of american editors.. and would like to tell them my theories concerning them.. It seems the Dial can't use anything by anyone who doesn't live in some other country.. they are so highbrow and sterile.. let BLUES be just the opposite.. at least pregnant with lots of healthy bastard children who may be either godlike or deformed.⁶⁷

Young's comments are pertinent for a number of reasons. Aside from revealing her delight in sheer provocation, Young's letter situates *Blues* in the wider context of American modernist little magazines.⁶⁸ Look at the language in which Young couches her comments.

⁶⁶ Vogel, 'Literary Graveyards', p.30.

⁶⁷ Kathleen Tankersley Young to Charles Henri Ford, 22 March 1929. Beinecke. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 189.

⁶⁸ More specifically, it seeks to differentiate *Blues* from those established organs of first-wave literary modernism like Schofield Thayer's *The Dial*. Young is reacting against the version of high-modernism propagated by established magazines like *The Dial*. Alan Golding writes of how *The Dial* played 'crucial role in the canonization of one particular cornerstone of high modernism, and in the institutionalization of a previously coterie poetics', Alan Golding, 'The Dial, The Little Review, and the Dialogics of

Young's impassioned plea to Ford to 'let BLUES be just the opposite.. at least pregnant with lots of healthy bastard children who may be either godlike or deformed' is particularly suggestive. Young contrasts the 'healthy bastard children' that she hopes Ford's *Blues* will birth to those engendered in the altogether more 'sterile' environment of the established *Dial*.

Considered from a slightly different angle, Young's hope that the 'bastard children' of *Blues* will be born 'godlike or deformed' can be opposed to refined, integrated, and 'homogenous' form of literature favored by Ransom. Alternatively, we might productively contrast Young's comments with the *Survey* of Riding and Graves. Young hopes that Ford will editorially steer the 'healthy bastard children' of his *Blues* in quite the 'opposite' direction to the route for poetic purification favored by Riding and Graves. In particular, consider Young's comments in relation to Riding and Graves's depiction of the literary landscape supposedly left in the wake of modernist experimentalism: 'It has been followed by a pause in which no poetry of any certainty is appearing at all, an embarrassed pause after an arduous and erudite stock-taking'. The mere existence of Ford's *Blues* reveals Riding and Graves's account to be critically deficient. The 'pause' described by Riding and Graves is not in the least bit embarrassed in Ford's capable editorial hands. Rather, it is a pregnant pause: one charged with poetic potentiality. The great critical merit of *Blues* is the continued existence of a healthy avant-garde heterogeneity, irrespective of the fact that others might try to label such experimentalism illegitimate, or even dead and buried.

Nor would such accusations of aesthetic illegitimacy have alarmed Ford. He tacitly understood how to turn any such accusations to his advantage whilst editing *Blues*. Illegitimacy is a cause for celebration in relation to *Blues*. Poetic hybridization ultimately reveals itself to be the only tenable option in *Blues*. Subtle transformative processes of renovation are employed in *Blues* in an attempt to circumnavigate accusations of poetic sterility, inbreeding, and aesthetic repetitiveness. Much as Young initially hoped it would be, *Blues* eventually proved more than willing to celebrate *deformity* of a distinctly *American* variety (see chapter six).

Modernism', Suzanne W. Churchill and Adam Mckible (ed.), *Little Magazines & Modernism: New Approaches*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p.74. As we will see in the next chapter, Ford sought to differentiate the 'new rhythms' in *Blues* from what he perceived to be an increasingly institutionalized version of high-modernism.

We can also read Ford's first editorial and literary venture as an implicit rebuke to Hugh Kenner's belief that those American writers working in the wake of first-wave modernism inherited a homemade, *fully formed* tradition. According to Kenner, the second-wave modernists were 'born mature, not to say middle-aged'.⁶⁹ Whilst discussing the Objectivist poets, Kenner argues that the quality of the work produced by second-wave modernists 'is that of men who have inherited a formed tradition: the tradition over the cradle of which, less than twenty years previously, Ezra Pound had hoped to have Henry James, O.M., speak a few sponsoring words'.⁷⁰ But are matters as simple as Kenner might have us believe? Charles Bernstein argues not. Bernstein argues that the writers of second-wave modernism 'cover the first wave of response to many of the radical and disruptive innovations of the modernist poets and artists of the previous generation'.⁷¹ In fact, 'second-wave modernism may be the most profound critique of modernist art – not in theory, but in practice'.⁷²

The critique of modernist literature – in *practice*, not in theory – is precisely what we get in *Blues*. Aside from a few scattered pieces from first-generation modernists like Pound and William Carlos Williams (and, feasibly, Ford and Tyler's unpublished 'Program'), *Blues* rarely presents the reader with any easily recognized theoretical investigation or debate. However, it would be wrong to claim that *Blues* lacks a theoretical dimension. A definite theoretical and critical dimension can be discerned in *Blues*, but only if we are prepared to pay close attention to the way in which various texts in Ford's magazine are arranged. As we will see, Ford arranges his chosen materials in order to generate meanings and associations that reverberate through the pages of his magazine and which also impact on the wider field of literary modernism. In this respect, it is Ford's editorial 'practice' that comes to define the critique of earlier modernism that is contained in *Blues*. A nuanced close reading of *Blues* reveals that, as an editor, Ford sought tacitly to critique and to renovate modernism – through a process of subtle textual and editorial manipulation – during the brief publication run of his first little magazine.

⁶⁹ Hugh Kenner, *A Homemade World: The American Modernist Writers* (London: Marion Boyars, 1977), p.169.

⁷⁰ Kenner, *Homemade World*, p.169.

⁷¹ Charles Bernstein, 'Objectivist Blues: Scoring Speech in Second-Wave Modernist Poetry and Lyrics', *American Literary History* 20: 1-2 (2008) p.348.

⁷² Bernstein, 'Objectivist Blues', p.348.

Born in 1908, Ford certainly fits into Bernstein's schema of second-wave modernism. Contrary to what Kenner would like to think, second wave modernists like Ford were not born mature; nor were they born already middle-aged. Nor was a writer like Ford content to passively inherit a fully formed, mature modernist tradition. Ford sought to remodel modernism in his own, uncoded image; *Blues* represented his first concerted attempt to do so. However, neither Ford nor *Blues* arrived at this realization fully formed. As my close readings of *Blues* will show, Ford was only able to realize his attempted remodeling of modernism after working his way through a more conservatorial editorial process of modernist *recitation*. Broadly speaking, the first volume of *Blues* (1-6) is characterized by a *restorative* – rather than *renovative* – impulse. As we shall see in the next chapter, the defensive, conservationist quality of the early *Blues* eventually cedes to an extremely brief, but altogether more proactive renovative literary intervention that begins in the second volume (7-9) of Ford's little magazine.

An architectural analogy best illustrates what I have in mind when talking of the respective restorative and renovative impulses that typify the two volumes of *Blues*. Traditionally, restorations perform a conservatory function. Conventional restoration seeks to restore objects, buildings, and artworks to a condition that mimics their original form: or at least as close as feasibly possible. Moreover, as traditionally conceived, a successful restoration is one that prides itself on being, to all intents and purposes, undetectable to the untrained eye. An equivalent process occurs in the first volume of *Blues*. Ford was still finding his editorial feet in the opening issues of *Blues*. Barely out of his teens – and isolated in Mississippi – when the first issue of *Blues* appeared, Ford was not yet clear about what individual poetic direction to take; nor was he sure how best to formulate his response to increasingly canonized versions of contemporary literary modernism. Consequently, Ford occasionally appeared in awe of generally recognized versions of literary modernism (of which Ford's adolescent, fleeting idolization of Pound was a case in point).

However, youthful admiration could just as easily turn into child-like dependence. We can reasonably assert that Ford became overly dependent on modernist achievement in the very early issues of *Blues*. We might say Ford somewhat defensively shored up the achievements of early modernism in order to strengthen his own position in face of accusations of literary obsolescence and belated avant-garde dead-ends. Ford's editorial

actions have negative consequences in the early issues of *Blues*. As my close reading of the early issues of *Blues* will show, Ford's adolescent awe of certain aspects of first-generation modernism manifested itself in his editorial selection policy. Certain pieces selected for inclusion in the early issues of *Blues* are pastiches – some intentional, some not – of earlier, first-generation modernist literary forms. Ford's initial editorial policy results in what can only be described as the curiously *recitative* quality of the early issues of *Blues*. In other words, by looking to earlier modernist models for inspiration and support, Ford's early *Blues* perform an unintended conservational function.

The unintended restorative aspect of the early issues of *Blues* is more than a touch ironic. Ford initially preserved precisely that which he sought to remodel: the remaining vestiges of first-generation literary modernism. This aesthetic restoration proves detrimental to Ford's early *Blues*: it partially accounts for the frustrated tone that becomes increasingly palpable as the first volume of *Blues* progresses. We might compare this situation with the one Ford was to later encounter in relation to *View*. In both instances, Ford was confronted with the problem of making his own critical intervention in a crowded culture sphere that is filled with the previous achievements of his aesthetic elders. However, in 1930, a fearlessly naïve – or perhaps naively fearless – Ford clearly relished the opportunity to challenge the authority of aesthetic elders.

Moving on, we can contrast the notion of restoration that informs the first volume of *Blues* with the one of renovation evident at the outset of the second. Unlike the conservationist dimension often implied by restoration, renovation can be subtly transformative. In simple terms, architectural renovation takes the 'blown husk' (to paraphrase the Pound of *Drafts & Fragments*) of a 'finished' structure and transforms the interior structure. From the outside, the structure may appear largely unchanged; but the same does not necessarily follow once inside. Any given interior renovation is subject to modification: whether it is radical or subtle. Unlike the conservationist, the renovator is afforded a much greater degree of individual flexibility and creativity. The renovator can decide whether or not to heed to the original blueprint that invariably comes attached to his design brief.

In simple terms, the second volume of *Blues* is best understood as the first of many pivotal moments in the trajectory of Ford's literary career. If we follow the progression of *Blues*, we can see that Ford soon realized that mere recitation of modernistic aesthetic

stylistics and gestures would not suffice if he was to carve a niche for himself in the literary world through ‘discovering’ new forms and rhythms. By the summer of 1929 – as the sixth issue of *Blues* attests – Ford’s editorial patience had reached breaking point. Despite having spent less than a year editing *Blues*, Ford had already tired of his dependence on advances made by older, more established writers. Matters come to a head in the sixth *Blues*. Relatively speaking, the sixth *Blues* is perhaps the single best-known issue of Ford’s magazine. Known as the ‘expatriate’ issue, the sixth *Blues* drew together a wealth of prominent first-generation American modernist writers: including Gertrude Stein, Eugene Jolas, H.D., Kay Boyle, Laurence Vail, and Harry Crosby.

Considering Ford’s youth and remote geographical location, the sixth issue of *Blues* is quite an achievement: logistically, editorially, and aesthetically. Never shy when pressed to talk about his past achievements, Ford would later describe the expatriate issue of *Blues* as ‘incredible’.⁷³ However, whilst it is important to acknowledge the sheer amount of organizational effort that went into the sixth *Blues*, I propose that the critical worth of the ‘incredible’ expatriate issue stems from the framing conceptual arrangement of the texts that Ford selected for inclusion. As my later close reading seeks to show, Ford’s editorial frustrations contribute to the parodic and *satirical* quality of the expatriate issue of *Blues*. The sixth *Blues* proffers a darkly humorous take on the excesses of first-generation modernist expatriatism. Furthermore, when the pivotal parodic expatriate *Blues* is read alongside its immediate successor, we can see that the seventh issue of Ford’s little magazine denotes a shift from the conservationist tendencies of the preceding issues.

Reading the seventh *Blues*, one is immediately struck by the sense that Ford has recognized the limitations of his initial – unintentionally recitative – editorial policy. The editorial and tonal shifts that occur in the second volume of *Blues* represent Ford’s tacit realization that the hitherto recitative dimension of his periodical needed to be reorganized. Adapting Ian Hamilton’s theorization of little magazines, we might say that whilst the seventh *Blues* is characterized by a ‘jaunty’ assertiveness, Ford’s editorial acumen and decisiveness prevents the magazine from ever slipping into indecision or recitation. In addition, though he lacked the critical vocabulary with which to articulate his aims at the time, Ford knew – albeit on an intuitive level – what he was doing with *Blues*. Ford sought to inaugurate a subtle renovation of modernism in the pages of *Blues*. In doing

⁷³ Charles Henri Ford interviewed by Allen Frame, *Journal of Contemporary Art* (Online Edition).

so, Ford hoped to ensure his own viability as a modernist practitioner in a contemporary environment that had already declared such aesthetic customs obsolete. And what better way for Ford to begin his belated 'cultural renovation' than with that archetypal domicile of literary modernism: the little magazine?

Chapter Six: Charles Henri Ford and the Original *Blues* Implosion, 1929-30:

with torn nails i build grandly the last madhouse for a burned dream¹

This chapter seeks to recover the little magazine *Blues: a Magazine of New Rhythms*. It attempts to understand how and why it left such a deep impression on Charles Henri Ford. Desirable as it may be critically to investigate all the finer nuances this magazine and its contributors, the wide-ranging – and occasionally variable – nature of the contents necessarily limits us to a consideration of how the magazine relates to Ford himself and his attempt to renovate modernism.

Blues tells us a lot about Ford and his desire to rework modernism. His modernist little magazine is populated by a number of different contributors and their particular voices. But, as previously discussed in the context of his poetics, *Blues* also relates to Ford's preoccupations with sociability. Ford operates both as poetic contributor to and as editor of *Blues*. However, the distinction between these two roles is largely superficial when considered in relation to Ford. As Suzanne W. Churchill suggests, '[l]ittle magazines are intimate and social: they bring together an ensemble of writers into a small space, staging a performance for a familiar audience of like-minded people, who read each issue during the same limited time period'.² In particular, notice the emphasis that Churchill places on the *sociable* aspect of little magazines. Given what we already know about Ford, it makes complete sense that his first literary venture was one that allowed for inter-subjective communication and sociable aesthetic exchange. In *Blues* we find a sociable inclusivity that anticipates projects like *The Young and Evil* insofar as it provides an inclusive textual forum allowing for a 'freakish' (Riding and Graves) collective of likeminded individuals.

From the outset, Ford and his close associates stressed the sociable and inclusive aspects of *Blues*. The extremely diverse *Blues* was described in democratic terms as a

¹ Charles Henri Ford, 'To Be Pickled in Alcohol' (B1: 2, 39).

² Suzanne W. Churchill, 'The Lying Game: *Others* and the Great Spectra Hoax of 1917', Suzanne W. Churchill and Adam Mckible (ed.), *Little Magazines & Modernism: New Approaches*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p.179.

'collective experiment'³ that 'afforded modernism to everyone'.⁴ First and foremost, this particular collective experiment offered the possibility of discovery and subsequent exposure.⁵ As well as offering many unknown (and some unpublished) writers the possibility of early exposure, *Blues* also offered the promise of what Pierre Bourdieu describes as cultural capital. Bourdieu reasons that access to – and status within – the ever-shifting field of cultural production and power relations is determined by the possession and accumulation of cultural capital.⁶ Bourdieu argues that '[t]he field of power is the space of relations of force between agents or between institutions having in common of the capital necessary to occupy the dominant positions in different fields (notably economic or cultural)'.⁷ Whilst cultural capital does not necessarily ensure financial reward, the cultural benefits it does offer – honor, recognition, prestige, status – are invaluable.⁸ At the same time, it is also important to note that Ford's first literary and editorial venture was far from perfect.⁹ However, only in hindsight did a prematurely exhausted Ford realize that he had made individual and editorial mistakes during the brief

³ Parker Tyler, undated advertisement. Quoted in Charles Henri Ford, *Scrapbook: 1928-1931*, unpaginated, Charles Henri Ford Papers, Beinecke. Tyler's description of *Blues* as a 'collective experiment' anticipates the communal aspect of Ford's later chainpoem experiments.

⁴ Parker Tyler, 'Letter to the Editors of the English Journal' [1931]. Beinecke. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 176.

⁵ Kenneth Rexroth describes the impact that Ford — as well as *Blues*' assistant editor, Parker Tyler — had on American poetry, writing that the number of people they 'discovered or published when they were still practically unknown is astonishing. They discovered Erskine Caldwell, Edouard Roditi, and me in one issue', Kenneth Rexroth, *American Poetry in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), p.106.

⁶ Bourdieu illustrates his point about the underlying strictures determining the fields of (cultural and economic) power by way of reference to Gustave Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* (1869): 'A field of possible forces exercised on all bodies entering it, the field of power is also a field of struggle, and may thus be compared to a game: the dispositions, that is to say the ensemble of incorporated properties, including elegance, facility of expression or even beauty, and capital in its diverse forms – economic, cultural, social – constitute the trumps which will dictate the manner of playing and success in the game – in short the whole process of social ageing which Flaubert calls 'sentimental education', Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure in the Literary Field* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996), p.10.

⁷ Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, p.215.

⁸ Furthermore, in a move that recalls our previous discussion of Warhol, the precocious, astute, and ambitious Ford was quick to realize that his status as magazine editor afforded him that invaluable opportunity to benefit from the bestowal of meaning. That is to say, Ford recognized that his role as the editor of *Blues* offered him the opportunity to be 'the person who, by putting it on the market, by exhibiting, publishing or staging it, consecrates a product which he has 'discovered' and which would otherwise remain a mere natural resource; and the more consecrated he personally is, the more strongly he consecrates the work', Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p.75.

⁹ For instance, Ford's desire to announce his belated arrival on an already overcrowded modernist scene sat somewhat uneasily with his yearning to strike out and form lasting literary friendships via the pages of *Blues*.

publication history of *Blues*. As we will see, Ford's desire to rectify the mistakes he made whilst editing *Blues* effectively set the rest of his career in motion.

Burn the Housing Asking: How Best to Read *Blues*?

Before we begin, it is important to note that the process of reading an uncoded modernist little magazine like *Blues* is often difficult. David Bennett likens the process of reading a little magazine as 'an activity of selection and omission which produces the text as a (spatial) collage or (temporal) montage of fragments in provisional or indeterminate relations. The experience of periodical reading is an experience of discontinuity'.¹⁰ Whilst I agree with Bennett, I also want to suggest that the 'experience of discontinuity' that we experience when reading a little magazine like *Blues* is only temporary. That is to say, we can see that continuities abound in Ford's magazine: but only if we are willing to pay close enough attention to the contents of *Blues*.

First, we can see continuities within each individual issue of *Blues*. Ford's arrangement of the individual texts selected for inclusion in each issue of *Blues* is not haphazard. By considering the spatial arrangement of the ostensibly disparate texts that constitute any given issue of *Blues*, we can more clearly see what Ford wanted to achieve in his magazine. Second, we can see how the themes and continuities in one particular issue of Ford's magazine stretch across the entirety of *Blues*. By looking at the nine magazines in chronological order, we can see how any given issue of *Blues* might develop, revisit, or dismiss themes debated in earlier installments (or anticipate themes of later issues). In this way, underlying critical patterns and trajectories emerge in *Blues*. Third, by paying close attention to *Blues*, we can more clearly situate Ford's formative editorial and poetic experience in relation to the field of modernist cultural production.¹¹

¹⁰ David Bennett, 'Periodical Fragments and Organic Culture, Modernism, the Avant-Garde, and the Little Magazine', *Contemporary Literature* 30: 4 (Winter 1989), p.482.

¹¹ Walter Kalaidjian argues that *Blues* was part of a new cultural force which sought to nurture a 'revolutionary textual practice' and that 'aspired to the avant-garde transformation of everyday life in its internationalist scope; its diversity of gender, racial, and class perspectives; its contentious mix of Greenwich Village bohemianism and Washington Square socialism; and its blend of high and populist styles', Walter Kalaidjian, *American Culture Between the Wars: Revisionary Modernism and Postmodern Critique* (New York: Columbia UP, 1993), p.9. To be sure, we can see signs of all this and more as we move through the nine issues of *Blues*.

Suzanne W. Churchill argues that little magazines ‘allow us to read modernist texts in their original contexts, offering a glimpse of what they meant to readers of the day’.¹² In this respect, modernist little magazines are important because they shape the meaning – and inform the reception – of any given text, as ‘[s]ituated within a miscellany of texts and images, modernist artworks lose the autonomous, monumental status they acquire in book form, generating meanings by association’.¹³ The latter part of Churchill’s assertion is especially pertinent when applied to *Blues*. As it lacks any sort of codified literary program, Ford’s magazine depends (and even thrives) upon ‘generating meanings by association’. It is the task of this chapter to understand how the generative associations produced in *Blues* might inform our understanding of Ford’s attempted renovation of modernism.

Blues 1: 1 (February 1929): Remembering the Halcyon Days:

In the opening lines of their retrospective account of *Blues* in *The Sewanee Review*, Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler exclaim proudly: ‘*Blues* started with a jump – with a spurt from the brain. The world was not prepared for it, for the world is never prepared for the really good things that are also new’.¹⁴ The suggestion that the initial impact of Ford’s modernist little magazine was an ejaculatory mental jolt refers back to the first issue of *Blues*.¹⁵ In particular, Ford and Tyler are alluding to the literary piece that opens *Blues*: Jacques Le Clercq’s short story ‘Jordan Revolver’.

Considered alongside Ford and Tyler’s retrospective *Sewanee Review* comments, Le Clercq’s ‘Jordan Revolver’ reveals a great deal about the first issue of *Blues*. But whilst Ford and Tyler might want confidently to assert that *Blues* began with a bang, ‘Jordan Revolver’ suggests that, if anything, the magazine opened with a more muted whimper. ‘Jordan Revolver’ shows little in the way of ‘more complete revolt’ promised in early advertisements for *Blues*. Contemporary critics were quick to emphasize the significant

¹² Suzanne W. Churchill, *The Little Magazine ‘Others’ and the Renovation of Modern American Poetry* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p.10.

¹³ Churchill, *‘Others’ and the Renovation of Modern American Poetry*, p.10.

¹⁴ Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, ‘What Happens to a Radical Literary Magazine’, *The Sewanee Review* (January 1931), p.62.

¹⁵ Notice the sexual dimension of Ford and Tyler’s ‘ejaculatory mental jolt’. In a way, the emphasis on sexualized imagery foreshadows their brazenly explicit collaborative novel: *The Young and Evil*.

distance between what *Blues* initially promised and what it delivered. Consider the criticism of *Blues* found in Jessica Nelson North's 'Convention and Revolt' (July 1929):

Blues, a magazine of new rhythms, contains no surprisingly new rhythms, but some notable poems by Louis Zukofsky, Kathleen Tankersley Young, and Horace Gregory. It features the modish uncapitalizing and unpunctuating which have been the conventional symbol of the modernist, and which will in the course of time be a brand of conservatism.¹⁶

Although Nelson's criticisms are directed at the fourth *Blues*, they might just as easily be applied to the inaugural issue of Ford's magazine. Responding to such criticism in *The Sewanee Review*, Ford and Tyler did their best to deflect attention away from the shortcomings of the early issues of *Blues*: 'Obviously, something attacked the nostrils in Denmark, and, speaking more plainly, each notice had been fraught with a determination to overlook what was worthwhile (however sometimes awkward or abortive) in *Blues*'.¹⁷

However, as much as Ford and Tyler would like to lay the blame for the mixed critical reception *Blues* received on the doorstep of an unjustly conservative literary establishment, the fact remains that even they would be hard pressed to find much of critical or aesthetic worth – either 'awkward or abortive' – in a story like Le Clercq's 'Jordan Revolver'. Suggestive title aside, there is little in Le Clercq's story that might give credence to the provocative claim that *Blues* 'started with a jump – with a spurt from the brain'. 'Jordan Revolver' is relatively prosaic in both form and content. It is best summarized by its closing paragraph: 'The story is exactly that. Jordan Revolver contracted a venereal disease from Rosie; he married a prostitute in Detroit; he was found dead and his cadaver was used for experimental purposes in the clinic at Ann Arbor. The rest is silence' (B1: 1, 9).¹⁸

Le Clercq hardly breaks new literary ground in 'Jordan Revolver'. Why, then, is this remarkably undistinguished story afforded the pride of place at the very front of Ford's *Blues*? The answer has much to do with Ford's vexed relationship with first-generation modernism. Ford's editorial decision to lead with Le Clercq's 'Jordan Revolver' indicates

¹⁶ Jessica Nelson North, 'Convention and Revolt', *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* (July 1929), p.216.

¹⁷ Ford and Tyler, 'What Happens to a Radical Literary Magazine', p.63.

¹⁸ Ford and Tyler pick up on the Shakespearian allusion in the final line of Le Clercq's 'Jordan Revolver' in their *Sewanee Review* piece, asserting that 'something had attacked the nostrils of Denmark', Ford and Tyler, 'What Happens to a Radical Literary Magazine', p.13.

his early dependence on modernistic elders. Born in 1899, Le Clercq had already published in prominent magazines like Eugene Jolas's *transition* by the time Ford's *Blues* made its belated arrival on the modernist literary scene. In short, the relatively established Le Clercq offered the precocious and unknown Ford an early opportunity to confer upon *Blues* a degree of modernist respectability and literary gravitas.

Ford's defensive attempts at conferring modernist credibility upon the early issues of *Blues* prove problematic. Looking at the opening story of the inaugural *Blues*, we can see that Ford's initial craving for credibility and approval could produce unintentionally ironic and revealing results. As we noted previously, famous supporters like Frederick J. Hoffman singled out the self-consciously experimental quality of *Blues* as one of the magazine's especial merits. But, if we choose to look more closely at the actual contents of the early *Blues*, we can discern the presence of an altogether different self-conscious element in Ford's magazine: one that pivots around the notion of stylistic recitation.

Le Clercq's opening short story epitomizes the self-consciously stylistically recitative element at work in the first *Blues*. Above all else, 'Jordan Revolver' bears a great stylistic debt to the literary Jazz Age depicted by F. Scott Fitzgerald in his debut novel: *This Side of Paradise* (1920).¹⁹ Much like Le Clercq's Jordan Revolver, Fitzgerald's protagonist Amory Blaine is an adolescent American Midwesterner. Both Le Clercq and Fitzgerald's protagonists are exposed to the relatively bright lights of big American cities (albeit with markedly different outcomes). Similarly, both narratives are punctuated by what Fitzgerald describes as 'juvenile intrigue'²⁰: 'On the Triangle trip Amory had come into constant contact with the great current American phenomenon, the "petting party"'.²¹ Amory's experiences tally with those depicted by Le Clercq's narrator in 'Jordan Revolver':

¹⁹ There is an interesting aside regarding Ford and Fitzgerald. Asked to comment on Ford and Tyler's controversial collaborative novel *The Young and the Evil* (1933), Gertrude Stein said that the pair created 'their generation as *This Side of Paradise* by Fitzgerald created his generation'. Given that the early *Blues* show little sign of 'creating' a new modernist generation, perhaps Ford saw the deficiency of his initial backward glance and responded accordingly in *The Young and Evil*. Nb. Gertrude Stein quoted in Philip Hoare, 'Obituary: Charles Henri Ford – Enigmatic survivor of New York's Bohemian Surrealists,' 1 October 2002, *The Independent* (Online Edition): <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/charles-henri-ford-644148.html>. Last accessed: 14 October 2010.

²⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p.54.

²¹ Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, p.54.

I spent the summer of 1915 at Apostle Island in Lake Superior... I learned for the first time the technique of what later came to be known as necking or petting, but which in that rude day was termed loving, or with inelegant emphasis, loving-up (B1: 1, 2).

In addition, both 'Jordan Revolver' and *This Side of Paradise* are replete with references to that most archetypical of Jazz Age enablers: alcohol. Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* is marked by youthful, alcohol-fuelled excess: 'The evening was so very young that they felt ridiculous with surplus energy, and burst into the café like Dionysian revellers'.²² Le Clercq's narrator similarly conveys the juvenile debauchery central in 'Jordan Revolver': 'I remember numerous examples of the effects of alcohol upon my youthful contemporaries. I remember with equal and elementary exactitude at least a score of people, and among them, Jordan Revolver' (B1: 1, 2).

However, differences begin to emerge. Fitzgerald turns his attention to an uncertain future at the close of *This Side of Paradise*: 'He wanted time and the absence of ulterior pressure. He wanted to keep the tree without ornaments, realize fully the direction and momentum of this new start'.²³ Whilst Fitzgerald looks forward – albeit despairing – to the problems facing the so-called 'Lost Generation' in *This Side of Paradise*, Le Clercq can be seen to be casting a conspicuously sentimental, backwards glance. Nostalgic sentimentality punctuates Le Clercq's narrative: 'After the Armistice, I managed to get out of the army by joining a demobilized soldier stock company and touring the A. E. F. camps or playing the Theatre Albert Premier in Paris. They were halcyon days' (B1: 1, 6).

Such nostalgic glances were hardly going to bring Ford nearer to uncovering new rhythms in *Blues*. If anything, Ford's decision to lead with Le Clercq's recitative piece leaves *Blues* perilously close to replicating the state of affairs depicted in *This Side of Paradise*:

As an endless dream it went on, the spirit of the past brooding over a new generation, the chosen youth from the muddled, unchastened world, still fed romantically on the mistakes and half-forgotten dreams of dead statesman

²² Ibid. p.101.

²³ Ibid. p.259.

and poets. Here was a new generation, shouting the old cries, learning the old creeds, through a reverie of long days and nights.²⁴

Fitzgerald's account of 'a new generation' – one that shouts the 'old cries' and learns the 'old creeds' – is worth bearing in mind. The 'spirit' of such a past manifests itself in a variety of guises elsewhere in the first *Blues*. This is especially true of Kathleen Tankersley Young's first contributions to *Blues*.²⁵ As we noted in the previous chapter, it was Young who envisaged Ford's *Blues* as a literary incubator for 'healthy' bastard offspring: one that would 'publish work by younger unknowns who have a sense of beauty: if they are intelligent and apt to grasp and grow publish their mistakes if they have that quality of beauty'.²⁶ In light of such remarks, it is surprising to discover that Young's early poetic reveries epitomize all that is stylistically repetitive about the first volume of *Blues*.

Young's contribution to the first issue of Ford's little magazine is a case in point. Young's 'Six Poems' opens with the bold assertion that 'the world turns and is brilliant now: / see now the narrow streets reel with yellow' (B1: 1, 10). Color-infused lines that evoke 'blind days (always the same), / spaced time: blue cold' (B1: 1, 11) and 'the brittle voices of dead small crimson leaves' (B1: 1, 11) appear at regular intervals throughout all of Young's 'Six Poems'. Young's poems are saturated – indeed, over-saturated – with color:

yellow is over the world now,
yellow winds are, and yellow leaves,
and mists on the river whirl golden with winter sunlight (B1: 1, 10).

These lines reveal Young's indebtedness to a variety of earlier verbal and visual modes of modernist expression. For example, Young's repeated insistence on yellow in the first of 'Six Poems' might be described – superficially, at least – as emblematic of a painterly attitude evoked in her poetry. 'Color is everywhere' (B1: 1, 10) in Young's first poem, with twelve of the sixteen lines mentioning color or sunlight. In this respect, Young's first poem exhibits a tendency towards the impressionistic. Young's emphasis on poetic stress and repetition – as seen in lines asserting that 'all is color that twists about those who are walking' (B1: 1, 10) – produces an awkward literary approximation of the 'twisting' and

²⁴ Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, p.259.

²⁵ A poet of the Harlem Renaissance, Young was also listed as an assistant editor to *Blues*.

²⁶ Kathleen Tankersley Young to Charles Henri Ford, 4 April 1929, Charles Henri Ford Papers, Beinecke.

‘reeling’ visual effect generated through repeatedly daubed brushstrokes, such as those depicting natural landscapes and human forms in the canvases of celebrated European Impressionist painters such as Claude Monet and Vincent Van Gogh.

At the same time, Young's description of 'mists on the river' that 'whirl golden with winter sunlight' evokes H.D.'s prime example of imagistic verse, 'Oread':

Whirl up, sea—
Whirl your pointed pines,
Splash your great pines
On our rocks,
Hurl your green over us,
Cover us with your pools of fir.²⁷

Young mines the imagery of H.D.'s early verse for inspiration whilst absenting herself from any of her precursor's mythological poetic concerns. Similar stylistic mimicry occurs elsewhere in Young's 'Six Poems':

remembered from midnight: leaf sound and rain
and the moon dropping down slowly again.
remembered from the first thing: one shadow
that swiftly trailed a crimson length on snow.
remembered from the new thing: only old
blind days (always the same),
spaced time: blue cold (B1: 1, 11)

At this point, Young's poem reads as a strange conflation of two earlier ones written by H.D.'s fellow Imagist compatriot, Ezra Pound. Young utilizes similar typographical techniques – specifically in her repeated deployment of the colon – earlier seen in the original version of Pound's 'In a Station of the Metro':

The apparition of these faces in the crowd :
Petals on a wet, black bough.²⁸

Young's poem, like the 1913 original form of Pound's famous imagistic haiku – as published in Harriet Monroe's famous modernist little magazine *Poetry* – takes a

²⁷ H.D., *Collected Poems, 1912-1944* (New York: New Directions, 1983), p.55.

²⁸ Ezra Pound, *Personae: Collected Shorter Poems* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1990), p.251.

recollection, a brief optical impression (in the second line) as a point of poetic departure: 'remembered from midnight: leaf sound and rain / and the moon dropping down slowly again'. In turn, these lines anticipate the content of the fifth of Young's 'Six Poems':

if moments spaced of ourselves
make, say, altogether living laughing ghosts
that chatter against time, noisily,
then let us pause, and build in the blue moon dust (B1: 1, 11)

Young draws attention to spatial design in the first line of the above extract. Perhaps her awareness of 'moments spaced of ourselves' can be read as an unconscious acknowledgement of the spatial and typographical lacunae in Pound's 'In a Station of the Metro'. Her mention of 'living laughing ghosts' is certainly reminiscent of the spectral visages of Pound's apparitions, those briefly glimpsed in the Paris Metro.

Young's contribution to the first *Blues* also recalls another of Pound's well-known Imagist poems, 'Liu Ch'e':

The rustling of the silk is discontinued,
Dust drifts over the court-yard,
There is no sound of foot-fall, and the leaves
Scurry into heaps and lie still,
And she the rejoicer of the heart is beneath them:

A wet leaf that clings to the threshold.²⁹

Like Pound's 'Liu Ch'e', the fourth of Young's 'Six Poems' is structured by a sense of the terminal, 'discontinued' past-tense. Young's poem is marked by dimly obscured absence, made clear when Young mentions 'one shadow / that swiftly trailed a crimson length on snow'. Such an absence – coupled with Young's insistence on 'old / blind days (always the same)' – is derivative: it harks back to Pound's earlier admission that the 'rustling' caused by the prior motions 'of the silk' has been 'discontinued'. Peter Nicholls, noting the shift from present to past tense in 'Liu Ch'e', suggests '[t]he image which resolves the poem in this sense accomplishes a withdrawal of affection from the lost object and its subsequent

²⁹ Ibid. pp.110-111.

reattachment to a substitute for that object'.³⁰ There is little of this complexity evident in the fourth of Young's 'Six Poems'. The colon that functions as connective acts as a mere signifier of equivalence – that is to say, 'spaced time' is represented as 'blue cold' – rather than as emblematic of textual transference.

However, it is still possible to detect a patterning of withdrawal in the latter stages of 'Six Poems' that harks back to the imagistic 'Liu Ch'e'. Whilst the first of 'Six Poems' stresses 'brilliant' colorful radiance, an altogether different proposition emerges at the close of the third:

Saying coldly what you are
Of the carefully builded [sic] nude small things
That you have sobbed against my breast.
While streets are asleep, now, now asleep,
And only the minute things that are still crying
Are the brittle voices of dead small crimson leaves (B1: 1, 11).

The cold, almost dispassionate tone of the narration – 'you have sobbed against my breast' – gives way at the close to another register of almost callousness and brittleness. Young's evocation of 'the voices of 'dead small crimson leaves' inaugurates a tonal shift in 'Six Poems'. Echoing Pound's earlier image of the 'wet leaf that clings to the threshold', it is indeed possible to chart a form of tonal withdrawal in 'Six Poems', culminating in the stark landscape depicted in Young's final poem where human habitation has 'been whitened and buried and hushed, / and all last leaves have gone darkly blind' (B1: 1, 12).

A noticeable shift in landscape depiction in Young's 'Six Poems' becomes evident in the six and final text, where 'snow has fallen over all the streets' (B1: 1, 12):

men have walked here in this snow,
footprints have been deep here,
winds have traced the snow over,
and children have been walking here in this same snow,
since the night when we talked
snow has fallen over all the streets (B1: 1, 12).

Like the 'dust' depicting absence, drifting over the scene in Pound's 'Liu Ch'e', snow eventually covers the landscape in Young's 'Six Poems'. Given what we already know

³⁰ Peter Nicholls, *Modernisms: a Literary Guide* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), p.170.

about *Blues*, it is tempting to view the blanket of snow that obliterates the poetic landscape of Young's 'Six Poems' as an attempted act of wiping the poetic slate clean: a symbolic cleansing of the aesthetic palette. However, the influence exerted by more established modes of literary and aesthetic modernism remains inescapable at this formative stage of Ford's *Blues*. Young's 'Six Poems' suffer as a result. She is unable to synthesize awareness of modernist modes of literature and aesthetics into poetry of significant critical significance. Whilst relatively technically accomplished, Young's imitative early poetry is akin to poetic ventriloquism. Young's poems emphasize how she – much like her editor – remained in thrall to first-generation modernism around the time of the inaugural *Blues*.

Young's pastiches are not the only examples of ventriloquism in the first *Blues*. Dialect is another. Michael North notes that modernist use of dialect is 'a constant reminder of the literal unfreedom of slavery and of the political and cultural repression that followed'.³¹ North draws out the negative implications of dialect in early modernist writing: 'Both symbol and actuality, it stands for a most intimate invasion whereby the dominant actually attempts to create the thoughts of the subordinate by providing it with speech'.³² This act of 'most intimate invasion' had benefits for those (mainly white) modernist writers who used dialect. The use of dialect allowed modernist writers 'the freedom of living outside the law, whilst simultaneously savoring connection to something more authentic found in Africa'.³³ However, failing to acknowledge their all-too-easy appropriation of purportedly 'authentic' African cultural and phonetic rhythms, the use of dialect also came to represent one of the more negative aspects of the literary modernists.

According to Charles Bernstein, second-generation modernists can be usually defined in terms of their willingness both to acknowledge and to critique the shortcomings of their first-generation forebears. If this is so, why would Ford choose to include Herman Spector's 'A Wohmmn' in *Blues*?

i wann, i wann a wohmmn
whose touch hrts.

no mere alyin en allayin drab.

³¹ Michael North, *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth Century Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994), p.11.

³² North, *Dialect of Modernism*, p.11.

³³ Ibid. p.67.

no cynico-mundane dust,
 no haddit befaw . . .
 i wann a wite wide wohmmn
 promising more (B1: 1, 13)

Like his first-generation modernist forebears, Spector evidently saw no problem with appropriating African-American rhythms. Moreover, Spector's poem contributes nothing to the tropes of physical nourishment and emotional 'warmth'³⁴ presupposed by African-American blues music:

tears r no damn good;
 but things to eat r good.
 a continually eaten wohmmn
 with vast hungriness... (B1: 1, 13)

As we can see, emotional suffering and physical hunger are conjoined in this problematic poem by primitivistic, gendered, and cannibalistic imagery connoting absence. In short, what we have here is an example of the negative connotations that can arise from an unreflective process of stylistic mimicry and poetic appropriation.

Ford's choice of periodical title is similarly problematic. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms* carries obvious and specific connotations arising from an act of cultural appropriation. As Stephen C. Tracy notes, 'the use of the word blues signified a different and broader group of musics for many African American artists in the twenties (and later) than for their white Modernist counterparts'.³⁵ Tracy suggests that the use of the term 'blues' by modernists like William Carlos Williams and Ford 'must be read in the light of their familiarity with only a segment of the variety of blues music and their often racist responses, deliberate or not, to African Americans'.³⁶

³⁴ 'Without going outside his race, and even among the better classes with their "white" culture and conscious American manners, but still Negro enough to be different, there is sufficient matter to furnish a black artist with a lifetime of creative work... To these the Negro artist can give his racial individuality, his heritage of rhythm and warmth, and his incongruous humor that so often, as in the Blues, becomes ironic laughter mixed with tears', Langston Hughes, 'The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain', Jon Cook (ed.), *Poetry in Theory – An Anthology 1900-2000* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), p.141.

³⁵ Stephen C. Tracy, 'William Carlos Williams and *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*', *William Carlos Williams Review*, (15.2, Fall 1989), p.19.

³⁶ Tracy, 'William Carlos Williams and *Blues*', p.19. Tracy argues elsewhere that Ford capitalized on 'the jazz-influenced popular music that had been "liberated" somewhat by the rhythms of the blues, for despite his proximity to the rural Southern blues of Mississippi, Ford was not drawing on folk blues but

Given her status as a writer of the Harlem Renaissance, Young was better placed to discern the problematic issues of cultural appropriation and unintentional racism than Ford.³⁷ Young was quick to recognize the specific connotations implied by Ford's chosen title:

Listen dear everyone I have told of the idea think it is a ripping but no one can figure out the BLUES.. they all say that it is a specialized word, new perhaps but with a limited meaning.. why not call it THE MODERN REVIEW.. or THE MODERNIST.. or MODERNS.. of course it is up to you.. but BLUES gives a limited strange sense..³⁸

In his rush to make an immediate impression on the literary scene, Ford chose to ignore the advice offered to him by Young. His decision to do so arguably backfired, as contemporary critics were left unsure as what to make of Ford's uncoded *Blues*. Furthermore, Ford's choice of magazine title – and his willingness to publish poems like 'A Wohmmn' – can be held up as examples of how the young and inexperienced editor of *Blues* could be as unreflective and culturally insensitive as his first-generation modernist progenitors in the early days of his career as periodical editor.³⁹

Blues 1: 2 (March 1929): Down with the Dean of First-Generation Corpses:

the jazz of commercial enterprise', Steven C. Tracy, *Langston Hughes and the Blues* (Chicago: Illinois UP, 1988), p.248.

³⁷ Whilst very little is known about Kathleen Tankersley Young, examples of her poetry feature in Maureen Honey (ed.), *Shadowed Dreams: Women's Poetry of the Harlem Renaissance* (New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1989).

³⁸ Kathleen Tankersley Young to Charles Henri Ford [undated]. Beinecke. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 189.

³⁹ The same is also true of Ford's problematic choice of subtitle. In his study of rhythm and race in modernist poetry, Michael Golston notes that 'theories of rhythm as blood- and race-based, as stimulated by environmental factors, as integral to a "primitive" layer of the world that Modernism seeks to make available, and as a "subconscious possession," were all part of the discussion involving what it meant to write to write Modernist poetry', Michael Golston, *Rhythm and Race in Modernist Poetry and Science* (New York: Columbia UP, 2008), p.58. Golston's study details the troubling role that the pseudo-scientific, racist philosophy of eurhythmics played in the construction of modernist poetry. What is more, Golston asserts that Ford's *Blues* was influenced by the philosophy of eurhythmics. More specifically, Golston cites Parker Tyler's 'New York Notes' (a critical piece included in the seventh *Blues*) as an example of racially inflected critical thinking. Whilst I would argue that Golston's reading is slightly selective, I want to hold our discussion of Tyler's significant critical piece in reserve until a later juncture in this chapter. For now, it suffices to note that Ford's questionable choice of subtitle is another instance of his modernistic tendency to cultural insensitivity.

The second *Blues* (March 1929) opens with a pair of critically orientated texts by those two poetic pillars of first-wave modernism: Ezra Pound ('Program 1929') and William Carlos Williams ('For a New Magazine'). The appearance of Pound and Williams in the second *Blues* represented quite the editorial coup for Ford.⁴⁰ Additionally, the appearance of Pound and Williams provides the second issue of Ford's magazine with an air of modernist gravitas that was lacking in the inaugural number. However, at the same time, the appearance of Pound and Williams leaves the second *Blues* open to the same accusations of modernist indebtedness that beset the inaugural issue of Ford's little magazine.

Ford's decision to situate Ezra Pound's stereotypically didactic 'Program 1929' at the beginning of the second *Blues* is a case in point. 'Program 1929' opens with a reiteration of Pound's customary demand for 'Government for utility only' (B1: 2, 29). This is all well and good, but – aside from a single reference to works of 'LITERARY' merit (B1: 2, 29) – there is nothing in Pound's 'manifesto' that sheds light on Ford's purported project of cultural renovation. In marked contrast to Pound's hectoring, Williams's contribution to the second *Blues* has much more to say about Ford's little magazine. 'For a New Magazine' opens with praise for *Blues*:

Blues is a good name for it, all the extant magazines in America being thoroughly, totally, completely dead as far as anything new in literature among us is concerned. Anything that fractures the stereotyped is definitely taboo, now as always. In the common mind America is just recovering from the post-war hysteria of a few of the more bizarre writers of that unsettled time, returning to the normal paths of good literary practice. In short to dullness, to stupidity, to regimentation, to business. Blues comes as near to stating the implied revolt from this as one could get to entitle a pushing, new venture (B1: 2, 30).

First, notice that Williams situates Ford's little magazine in relation to the disheartening state of contemporary cultural affairs in the United States. Second, consider how 'For a New Magazine' revisits topics that were addressed in the preceding chapter. Much like Laura Riding and Robert Graves, Williams is suggesting that a point of literary impasse – or a 'dead' end – had been reached by the late 1920s. However, unlike the more conservative Riding and Graves (who desired a return to a less self-consciously experimental sort of

⁴⁰ Lest we forget, we are talking here about a twenty-year old, geographically isolated Mississippian with no prior editorial or publishing experience.

poetry), Williams wants the younger second-generation modernist writers to build on earlier literary advances: 'But the young writers of today must not be allowed to lose what those of 1914 and thereabouts won—even to be held as weakly as it is—with difficulty' (B1: 2, 30). As he makes clear, Williams hoped that *Blues* would enliven 'by its invention, some breath of understanding, some lightness of touch that would seem authentic to an individual and was not originated in the lumbar region of the spiral chord—to the falling of flower petal or other putridity' (B1: 2, 31).

Inklings of what Williams had in mind emerge in the second part of Ford's 'To Be Pickled in Alcohol':

i rumble on the narrow streets and find an expiation for this chaos
he said it's red like that all over looking and i choked a cigarette butt
looking in my glass i am sure that i resemble a traffic squall or a sudden
snow
a promise has been too insistent and i mold stickily bread into a hanging
if a watch ticks shatter your unrest against abnormality (B1: 2, 39)

‘To Be Pickled in Alcohol’ is the antithesis of all that Riding and Graves sought to promote in their 1927 *Survey*. Instead of moderating, Ford’s poem amplifies the self-conscious, lyrical element: ‘i am sure that i resemble a traffic squall or a sudden / snow’. Similarly, it is tempting to read a line like ‘if a watch ticks shatter your unrest against abnormality’ as a tacit refutation of the views expounded by critics like Riding, Graves, and Joseph Vogel. The same is also true of Tyler’s ‘freakish’ contributions to the second *Blues*. Tyler’s contributions reveal that a twofold shift away from the precepts of first-generation modernism does indeed occur in the second *Blues*. Firstly, in spite of initial appearances, we can see that Tyler’s poems in fact represent a move away from the kind of sheer stylistic mimicry that characterized the contributions in the inaugural issue of *Blues*. Secondly, coupled with this break from stylistic recitation, Tyler’s poetic experiments also represent a direct challenge to earlier modernist ideals about coherence and controlled aesthetic patterning.

The opening of Tyler's 'Sonnet' is fairly conventional:

I smell an oriental luxury
from him
his suit is brown (B1: 2, 50)

Having described the object of his poetic desire (an exotically perfumed businessman), Tyler's 'Sonnet' becomes more formally diffuse:

I smell an or-
iental lux
I love his nose
ury
from him (B1:2, 50)

Tyler's 'Sonnet' closes with the following lines:

I smell an orien-
tal
he's in busi
luxury from him
ness
I
a Jew and O his sex ap
smell
an
peal
rien
him
from
ury
lux
smell (B1: 2, 51)

To be sure, Tyler's self-consciously imitative 'Sonnet' recalls the typographically experimental work of continental avant-garde poets like Guillaume Apollinaire.⁴¹ But we need not to cross the Atlantic in order to find an avant-garde correlative for Tyler. Tyler's 'Sonnet' bears the imprint of another American sonneteer: E. E. Cummings. Here is an extract from Cummings's poem beginning 'Jimmie's got a goil' (1926):

Jimmie's got a goil
goil

⁴¹ The descending lineation utilized at the end of Tyler's 'Sonnet' recalls the form of Apollinaire's 'Bleuet'.

goil
 goil,
 Jimmie
 's got a goil and
 she coitnly can shimie⁴²

Like Ford, Tyler was an enthusiastic supporter of Cummings. This enthusiasm is evident in an unpublished piece written by Tyler. The title of Tyler's piece is self-explanatory: 'Imaginary Conversation between Mr. E. E. Cummings and the Editors of BLUES'. Tyler's first question sets the tone: 'Do you realize, Mr. Cummings, that much poetry is now being written which owes something to you in technique and in general esthetic, but that this poetry is showing a distinction of its own?'⁴³ Clearly, Tyler's 'Sonnet' owes something to Cummings 'in technique and in general esthetic'. But the qualification Tyler attaches to his question is equally pertinent. Tyler is making a 'distinction' here between first-generation modernists like Cummings and those of his contemporaries. Bearing this distinction in mind, we are better placed to appreciate that we are not dealing with mere stylistic recitation or imitation in Tyler's 'Sonnet'. That is to say, whilst Tyler does indeed draw upon Cummings's earlier typographical experiments, the effect produced by the younger writer's poetry is markedly different from that of his first-generation modernist elder.

Critics like Riding and Graves note that context is important when reading a first-generation modernist like Cummings. When read out of context, the poems of Cummings 'seem to support any charge of irrational freakiness, but in their context are completely intelligible'.⁴⁴ In other words, whilst such poetry might look chaotic, it is actually relatively 'clear'⁴⁵ and coherent. Now contrast the first-generation attitude of Cummings to the second-wave approach of Tyler. David Arnold argues that Tyler's poem 'parodies the conventional sonnet in its disarrangement; there is a discernible formal design but one that works at the expense of sense'.⁴⁶ Arnold does an excellent job of summarizing the processes operating in Tyler's 'Sonnet': 'Throughout the poem two compositional units clash like tectonic plates, resulting in not only the disruption of syntax but also the

⁴² E. E. Cummings, *is 5* (New York: Liveright, 1985), p.30.

⁴³ Parker Tyler, 'Imaginary Conversation between Mr. E. E. Cummings and the Editors of BLUES' [undated]. HRC. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 3, Box, 19, Folder 2.

⁴⁴ Riding and Graves, *Survey*, p.30.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p.36.

⁴⁶ David Arnold, *Poetry and Language Writing: Objective and Surreal* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2007), p.58.

fragmentation of individual words'.⁴⁷ Tyler's second-generation treatment of syntax goes much further than the earlier ones of a writer like Cummings. This is especially true of the cascading finale of Tyler's 'Sonnet'. Syntactic ambiguity and incoherence marks Tyler's 'Sonnet'. How are we meant to parse the close section of Tyler's poem: from left to right, perhaps, or top to bottom? We cannot be certain. The end of Tyler's 'Sonnet' is constructed so as to challenge expectations about coherence. And that is the point: the deliberate omission of what Lynn Keller describes as the 'stable patterning'⁴⁸ underwriting first-generation modernist poetic production distinguishes Tyler's 'disruptive' (Arnold) second-generation approach from that of Cummings.⁴⁹ In addition, Ford's decision to position Tyler at the very end of the second *Blues* is indicative of the former's editorial dissatisfaction with the first two *Blues*. Where the second *Blues* began with Pound's stentorian bellow, it ends with Tyler's ambiguous, fractured ripostes to first-generation modernist assumptions about coherent, 'fixed' meaning. Thus the second *Blues* draws to a close by hinting at something more than mere modernist recitation. But it is only a hint.

Blues 1: 3-5 (April-June 1929): The Awakening of an Impulse?

The April issue of BLUES is at hand.. it is much much better than the other issues.. the cover is better and one can read without difficulty the inside of the cover.. and the contents show variety which it seems to me the most important thing in a magazine of this type. No poems and prose in this issue have any similarity.. they are all different.. experimental if not good and direct.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Arnold, *Poetry and Language Writing*, p.59.

⁴⁸ 'While sharing the modernists' awareness that stable patterning is absent from the external world, later generations doubt the value of constructing order and creating controlling patterns', Lynn Keller, *Re-making it New: Contemporary American Poetry and the Modernist Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987) p.10.

⁴⁹ Zhaoming Qian suggests that William Carlos Williams's 'Portrait of an Author' is a characteristic 'example of how he labors to absorb the Chinese art form and how he success in adapting it to his domestic need', Zhaoming Qian, *Orientalism and Modernism: The Legacy of China in Pound and Williams* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 1995), p.127. Qian's remarks about Williams are pertinent when considered in relation to Tyler's exotically scented 'Sonnet'. In particular, consider the suggestion that Williams tries to *domestic* his Chinese subject matter in 'Portrait of an Author'. In contrast to Williams, Tyler does not attempt to domestic the 'oriental' element of his 'Sonnet'. Indeed, the increasingly diffuse syntactical patterning of Tyler's 'Sonnet' suggests almost uncontrollable *proliferation* rather than domestication. Thus we might say that Tyler's approach can also be differentiated from that of his first-generation modernist forebears In this regard.

⁵⁰ Kathleen Tankersley Young to Charles Henri Ford, 20 April 1929. Beinecke. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 189.

So wrote Kathleen Tankersley Young to Charles Henri Ford on 20 April 1929. Young has many positive things to say about Ford's third *Blues*.⁵¹ Young praises the diverse and experimental quality of the contributions selected for inclusion in the third *Blues*. Variety characterizes the third *Blues*: both in terms of contributors *and* their contributions. Experimental prose pieces by younger writers like Ford ('The Room') and William Closson Emory ('Miner Away') sit comfortably alongside more formally conventional poems by Mark Van Doren ('Two Poems') and Pauline Leader ('Slavery of Earth'). Sentiments ranging from quiet curiosity to outright exuberance typify the contributions of many of the second-generation poets featured in the third *Blues*. Norman Macleod's 'A Woman Swayed' captures the element of youthful curiosity:

Juvescently curious,
i postulated furiously
the integrity
of my position,
but a woman swayed forth
on the banister
and i doubted
conviction (B1: 3, 72)

Macleod's poem opens with an allusion to T. S. Eliot's 'Gerontion' (1920). Macleod's 'juvescently curious' choice of words refers back to Eliot's famous lines: 'In the juvencence of the year / Came Christ the tiger'.⁵² Where Eliot's poem records the impressions of an elderly old man, Macleod's relays the furious postulations of an adolescent male. In this regard, Macleod and Eliot's poems are poles apart. Whilst the elderly figure of Eliot's poem says that he has 'lost my passion',⁵³ the juvenile of Macleod's poem has his head turned by a woman: blithely casting aside his concerns with 'integrity' in the process. Macleod's humorous take on adolescent pretension, desire, and curiosity spills over into outright

⁵¹ Young's positive remarks about the third edition of Ford's little magazine can be contrasted with her negative appraisal of the preceding issue of *Blues*: 'I think the second issue of BLUES is pretty bad.. I've looked at it from every stand point.. and argued with myself ALL FOR IT.. but its no use.. things must have a pattern even though the pattern be abstract.. meaninglessness cannot pass for abstract patterns with me.. I don't want to discourage you.. but this frankness need be written and you need not take the advice', Kathleen Tankersley Young to Charles Henri Ford, 4 April 1929. Beinecke. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 189.

⁵² T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), p.39.

⁵³ Eliot, *Collected Poems*, p.41.

exuberance in poems like Oliver Jenkins's 'Portrait of a Crusader Giving a Heart-to-Heart Talk':

*i stand 4square with love love love i
 LOVE allofyou myfriends peeuritee is
 a bellybusting banner flipping in the pure
 o zone getitandholdittoyourhearts (B1: 3, 69)*

As we can see, what Jenkins's poem lacks in aesthetic merit, it makes up for with sheer syntactical vibrancy. However, whilst Jenkins's delight in the sheer potentiality of language carries over into many of the pieces in the fourth and fifth issues of *Blues*, such exuberance cannot conceal the fact that Ford's magazine reaches a definite sort of impasse as it moves into its middle period. Reading these two issues together, it becomes apparent that very few of the pieces in the fourth and fifth *Blues* provide much in the way of exciting, relevant, or 'new' modernist rhythms.

At this point, having watched his little magazine drift into conceptual and aesthetic slightness, an increasingly frustrated Ford is forced to stop and take stock. The close of fifth *Blues* is especially important in this regard. To be more specific: the two contributions found at the end of the fifth *Blues* denote an irrefutable point of departure in both the direction of Ford's editorial decision and of his little magazine. The pieces I have in mind here are Harry Crosby's 'Trumpet of Departure' and Oliver Jenkins's 'Confession: Creative Criticism in the U. S., Introducing A Way Out for Critics of Verse'. Crosby's 'Trumpet of Departure' begins:

Abominable dead harbor of the Past. You are the poison Satan urges me to drink. I smell the stench of your wharves even to this day. Your coils of ropes are serpents ready to strike. Your warehouses house enormous sacks of bric a brac (ha! the tyranny of things). You tumbrel-wagons are piled high with the empty barrels of hypocrisy (B1: 5, 130).

Crosby's opening remark resonates in the context of *Blues*. After all, Ford sought constantly to situate his magazine – and thus himself – in relation to 'past' (echoes of Riding and Graves here) literary moments. Read alongside Jenkins's 'Confession', Crosby's heavy-handed metaphorical 'Trumpet of Depart' indicates Ford's desire to find a 'way out' of the editorial rut into which he has steered *Blues*. Jenkins's critical piece describes the

hardships, prejudices, and hypocrisies facing the writers of 'new poetry' (B1: 5, 131). In a manner not dissimilar to Crosby, Jenkins wants to move away from what he perceives to be a stultifying (literary) world. What is more, Ford's decision to situate the notorious American émigré Crosby at the close of the fifth issue anticipates the latter's reappearance at the very close the sixth *Blues* (the so-called expatriate number). Unbeknownst to him, Crosby was to play a crucial role in the sixth *Blues*. Ford utilizes Crosby in order to signal his magazine's symbolic departure from clichéd modes of tried and tested modernist expression.

Blues 1: 6 (July 1929): Meek Madness in Mississippi, or, Suicide for Effect?

The sixth *Blues* is commonly known as the 'expatriate' number of Ford's little magazine. The origins of Ford's expatriate *Blues* can be traced back to an earlier comment made by William Carlos Williams: 'A new magazine might too open up a path for the appearance of Americans in Europe and elsewhere where their observations, their serious observations of other countries and peoples might be laid before us for decent study' (B1: 2, 30). Guided by Ford's conscious editorial hand, the sixth *Blues* anticipates the dialogue about the construction of 'American' poetic identities and idioms that follows in the seventh number.

The expatriate issue of *Blues* represented yet another editorial coup for the geographically isolated Ford (who had yet to meet any of his contributors in July 1929). Superficially, the expatriate *Blues* follows the pattern established in the majority of the previous issues. Ford's expatriate magazine leads with a prominent first-generation modernist before giving way to younger writers. At first glance, it might be tempting to say that prominent older modernists (Gertrude Stein, H.D.) bolster the expatriate issue of *Blues* significantly. However, whilst the July issue of Ford's magazine does feature contributions from venerable American expatriate first-generation modernists: it does not rely on them. The expatriate *Blues* opens with Stein's portrait of the French avant-gardist Georges Hugnet and closes with Harry Crosby's mystical, stream-of-consciousness 'House of Ra'. Sandwiched between Stein and Crosby's pieces are the contributions of numerous younger expatriate writers like Walter Lowenfels, Eugene Jolas, Kay Boyle, Leigh Hoffman, Harold J. Salemsen, George Linze (translated by Salemsen), and Laurence Vail.

The fact that Stein and Crosby (a poet ten years older than Ford) open and close the sixth *Blues* is significant. For better (Stein) or worse (Crosby), both writers came to represent an American expatriate literary sensibility. According to Daniel Katz, Stein 'became the archetypal American expatriate artist for her generation, linking cultural authority to the continent once again'.⁵⁴ That is not to say that Stein rejected America outright: 'elements of Americanness are not only maintained [in Stein's work] but often and turned loose, yet precisely as *estranged* from any value they might have as onto-topographical indices of subjective authenticity or coherence'.⁵⁵ Katz asserts that Stein's conception of Americanness is based around 'forms of repetition, decontextualization, and defamiliarization'.⁵⁶ As we shall see, Katz's comments are worth bearing in mind: particularly as decontextualization and defamiliarization are two interrelated terms that will aid our understanding of the seventh *Blues*.

On a less theoretical level, we can appreciate the logic behind Ford's decision to publish an expatriate issue of *Blues*. Incongruous as it might seem initially, Ford evidently hoped to tap into a rich tradition of dynamic modernist expatriatism (embodied in periodical form by earlier American little magazines like *Broom*, *Secession*, *The Little Review*, and *This Quarter*). Whilst understandable, Ford's paradoxical gesture of expatriate solidarity ran the risk of appearing outmoded. After all, '[t]he association of modernism with expatriation and exile is venerable to the point of being a cliché'.⁵⁷ The arrangement of materials in the sixth *Blues* (especially at the end) is designed to combat such cliché. The sixth *Blues* signals a shift away from certain modes of Eurocentric, expatriate first-generation literary modernism that had become passé by 1929.

Having said that, the sixth *Blues* initially seems to celebrate the condition of voluntary exile. Consider 'Antipodes' by Walter Lowenfels:

A taxi! A taxi!
To Nineveh!—Rome!
No two people walk alike.
I shall

⁵⁴ Daniel Katz, *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene: The Labour of Translation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007), p.95.

⁵⁵ Katz, *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene*, p.117.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p.113.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p.1.

*Search the antipodes
to find
Spring where Helen lies
Constantly out of season (B1: 6, 142).*

Lowenfels's evocation of wanderlust is relatively conventional. Dissatisfied with his surroundings, the speaker is hailing a taxi that he hopes will transport him to the famous historical and cultural sites (Nineveh, Rome) of the old-world, places where 'no two people walk alike'. However, when read in relation to the other contributions in the sixth *Blues*, we can see that Lowenfels's poem is something of an exception. Direct references to expatriatism are few and far between in the sixth *Blues*. Not that it matters. After all, nowhere does it say that expatriate writers must address issues arising from their expatriate existence.

What *does* matter is that we better understand the process of editorial patterning at work in Ford's expatriate *Blues*. Broadly speaking, the first half of the issue is alternately serious (Leigh Hoffman's 'A Great Day for a Little Man') and sincere (Kay Boyle's 'Confession to Eugene Jolas'); the second generally more playful and parodic (Crosby being a notable exception). As in the fifth issue, the contributions that carry the most critical weight in the expatriate *Blues* are the last two: Laurence Vail's 'Meek Madness in Capri or Suicide for Effect' and Harry Crosby's 'House of Ra'. Much like the 'Trumpet of Departure' (Crosby) that precedes the 'Confession' (Jenkins) at the end of the fifth *Blues*, Vail and Crosby's contributions to the expatriate edition of Ford's magazine should be read together. The effect produced by such a reading is markedly different to the one that we saw in the fifth *Blues*. Where Jenkins's earlier 'Confession' complements Crosby's heralded 'Trumpet of Departure', Vail's sardonic 'Suicide for Effect' acts as a preemptive corrective to Crosby's overblown 'House of Ra'.⁵⁸

Crosby's peculiar brand of aesthetic sun worship epitomizes his contribution to the expatriate *Blues*. Here is a (stereo)typical extract:

⁵⁸ Crosby is best remembered as publisher of the influential Black Sun Press and as a particularly staunch supporter of Jolas's *transition*. Here is Dougald McMillan's account of Crosby: 'Under the influence of Surrealism and readings in Egyptian mythology, Crosby developed a private mystique of sun worship. For him the sun represented the source of all life to which everything must ultimately return. Passionate experience, dreams, sexual orgasm, and death were man's means of access to his greater power. The point of life was to live and dream at a fever pitch and to die at the height of passion', McMillan, *transition: the History of a Literary Era, 1927-1938*, p.119.

O Sun I in to you the arrow of my soul (under the sharp point that pierces the flesh); let the sun shine (and the Sun shone) on the Pyramids and Palms, on the Step Pyramid at Sakkara, on the Unknown Pyramid of Beyond, on the Unknown Pyramid that stands between the body and the soul (B1: 6, 160).

As is well known, one of the infamous byproducts of Crosby's inscrutable lyrical blend of mysticism and aestheticism was 'a strangely positive personal cult of suicide'.⁵⁹ I mention this as it helps us better appreciate Vail's companion piece: 'Suicide for Effect'. From title to typography, Vail's poem is absolutely parodic and satirical. Vail's 'Suicide for Effect' anticipates Crosby's appearance in the sixth *Blues*, whilst simultaneously lampooning his fellow expatriate's various sexual extravagances, as well as his poetic, mystical, and expatriate pretensions. Expatriate decadence and violence go hand-in-hand throughout 'Suicide for Effect':

I shall slide into the embassy like a knife
or shall it be a brothel
a chic church
and rip the passports
stopping the slits with birdies (B1: 6, 155)

Vail's evocation of clichéd expatriate living is as unappealing as it is unromantic. Much is made of 'gums obscene' (B1: 6, 155) and 'grease spots of vice' (B1: 6, 155). Vail then goes on to cast aspersions on the sexual proclivities that those like Crosby deemed so important to their aesthetic:

old right arm cardboard
drowsy and numb with thumbs
drowsy and numb with thumbs
my sex a drooping lily (B1: 6, 156)

Vail's pathetic and impotent 'mister poet' (B1: 6, 156) is obsessed nonetheless with sex and death in equal measure:

I'll peel me quick

⁵⁹ McMillan, *transition*, p.119.

naked but unexciting miseree
 tiptoe a something high
 a roof a lash a head note
 and now
 to death mayhap
 amusement

leap I leap I (B1: 6, 157)

The depiction of death as mere 'amusement' is significant.⁶⁰ Vail is suggesting that the poet-narrator of 'Suicide for Effect' is prone to pretentious, empty posturing: 'in mystic mines / purses and easy journeys / in swift plush chairs' (B1: 6, 154). Given Crosby's biography (he was the heir to the J.P. Morgan fortune), we might reasonably suggest that Vail is alluding to the former's easy living, and to his more mystical aesthetic tendencies. Vail chides Crosby as the poem draws to a close:

the end in the end is the end of ends
 thy young man was a mess

a mess
 a mess
 a mess
 a mess
 a mess (B1: 6, 158)

Ford's decision to situate 'Suicide for Effect' immediately before Crosby's 'House of Ra' can be read as an attempt preemptively to deflate the latter's remarkably po-faced contribution to the expatriate *Blues*. Ford's editorial ordering also lends the last stanza of Vail's poem an air of uncanny prescience:

I am most dead
 hence not without grandeur
 of sorts it is not meet to scratch

⁶⁰ Edward Brunner characterizes Crosby's expatriate life in terms of 'amusement': 'Crosby no doubt first took up writing poetry much as he took up other amusements like living the expatriate life in France or owning race-horses or driving a Bugatti. His independent wealth, multiplied as a result of the favorable exchange rate enjoyed by the American dollar in postwar Europe, allowed him such indulgences as refurbishing a medieval mill for living quarters outside Paris or taking extended traveling tours, or experimenting with photography, or learning to fly solo in an aeroplane, a gadget still so new in 1929 that no one had agreed on its spelling'. Edward Brunner, 'Harry Crosby's "Brief Transit"' (2001): http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a_f/crosby/bio.htm. Last Accessed: 12 November 2010.

beyond extremis dead? very.
 the final journey should have an air
 begad my coffin is no taxi (B1: 6, 158)

Crosby committed suicide (10 December 1929) some five months after 'House of Ra' appeared in the expatriate *Blues*. Crosby's decadent expatriate lifestyle and scandalous death (a notorious case of murder-suicide) was a cause célèbre. For some prominent critics, Crosby's death represented the end of an expatriate literary era. In his seminal *Exile's Return*, Malcolm Cowley remarked that Crosby's sudden death made him a 'symbol'⁶¹ of the terminal decline of the literary Jazz Age of the 1920s.

Tyrus Miller situates Crosby's death in relation to the wider field of modernism. Miller argues that by the end of the 1920s,

the prophetic role of the modernist artist had been severely challenged by the convergence of several major currents. Modernism itself had aged, and its claims to represent the future had often proved hollow. Its imperative to innovate threatened modernism's adherents with personal and artistic exhaustion, exemplified most poignantly, perhaps, by the suicides of Harry Crosby and Hart Crane.⁶²

Miller's general theorization of the late modernist period (circa 1926) is also pertinent. According to Miller, 'late modernist writing appears a self-conscious manifestation of the ageing and decline of modernism, in both its institutional and ideological dimensions'⁶³. Miller asserts that 'it is as if the phosphorescence of decay had illuminated the passageway to a reemergence of innovative writing after modernism'.⁶⁴ Miller's analysis certainly is persuasive:

Sinking themselves faithlessly into a present devoid of future, into a movement grinding to a halt and an aesthetic on the threshold of dissolution, the writers of late modernism prepared themselves, without hope, to pass over to the far side of the end.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), p.273.

⁶² Tyrus Miller, *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, art the Arts Between the World Wars* (Berkeley: California UP, 1999), p.209.

⁶³ Miller, *Late Modernism*, p.7.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* p.7.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* p.14.

I want to suggest that the sixth *Blues* presents a similar symbolic passage to new, viable modes of innovative writing that begin to emerge in the next issue of Ford's little magazine. The writing that emerges in the seventh *Blues* comes close to fulfilling Kathleen Tankersley Young's call for a healthy, deformed, bastardized – and *American* – type of literature. In addition, one of the great merits of the boisterous and assertive seventh *Blues* is that it productively complicates Miller's otherwise compelling theorization of a more general move into a period of late modern *hopelessness*.

Nevertheless, the end of the sixth *Blues* is best described as a literal and symbolic *passing over* of sorts. Bearing Miller's analysis in mind, it is fitting that the sixth *Blues* (the last in the first volume) ends with the simultaneously pathetic and poignant figure of Crosby. Crosby's contribution becomes a sort of aesthetic marker with which to distinguish the second volume of *Blues*. Indeed, it is telling that Ford's contribution to the seventh *Blues* ('Suite') revisits themes developed in Crosby's 'House of Ra':

the sun gives light: that was the sun's light on my eyelids, not your fingers;
that was gin in my temples, not your arms around my head. Ordinarily i
would have known (B2, 7: 31).

Whilst significantly shorter in length, Ford's prose poem is formally similar to Crosby's 'House of Ra'. However, the point to be made here is that Ford's 'Suite' is entirely devoid of Crosby's quasi-mystical propensities.⁶⁶ Whereas Crosby attempts to enchant his reader via incantatory repetition, Ford prefers a more matter-of-fact kind of reportage: 'chicago is not a town to sneer at neither to grow sentimental over: you can stand under the el at five or fivethirty or six and talk as loud as you want to and nobody will hear you' (B2: 7, 31). Where Crosby strives for narrative metamorphosis, Ford records the banality of intoxication in relatively dispassionate language: 'there is so little to do here. all day yesterday i listened to ethel waters on the victrola crying am i blue forgetting a body still still and rigid with the dope in the veins not mattering' (B2: 7, 32). Ford's 'Suite' is one of numerous responses to earlier modes of modernist expression in the seventh *Blues*. In

⁶⁶ Crosby's aesthetic mysticism also relates to Eugene Jolas's *transition*-based 'Revolution of the Word' (1928). Crosby was a staunch advocate of Jolas. We can see that Crosby's 'House of Ra' was influenced by the following tenet of Jolas's Proclamation ('Revolution of the Word'): "Narrative is not mere anecdote, but the projection of a metamorphosis of reality". Eugene Jolas, *Critical Writings, 1924-1951* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2009), p.111.

contrast to the excesses of the expatriate number, the general tone of Ford's seventh *Blues* is punchy, demotic, and down to earth. In other words: it seems to be decidedly 'homegrown' (Kenner) and quintessentially 'American'.

Blues 2: 7 (Autumn 1929): get the hell over there who do you think you are mister ford:

William Carlos Williams summed up the tone of the seventh *Blues* In his 'Introduction to a Collection of Modern Writing':

We now boldly assert that saving the retreat there is no other way for writing in the present state of the world than that which BLUES has fostered.

"You MUST come over" (B2: 7, 3)

This introduction provides us with a useful means to approach the seventh *Blues*. As we will see, Williams's assertion that one 'MUST come over' resonates on two levels. On the one, his comment suggests a straightforward crossing of the Atlantic. On the other, this transition can be read as more than geographical (I have in mind here Miller's account of the reemergence of 'innovative writing' in the wake of first-generation modernism). Consider first the imploring tone of the piece. Williams is not asserting: he is demanding. This is an initial example of the remarkably assertive tone that marks the majority of the contributions to the seventh *Blues*. Williams poses the following question in his 'Introduction':

We live, gentle reader, in a world very much gone to pot, the thought of it tortured, the acts of it blind, the flight from it impossible.

What to do?

Either retreat, swallowing whole, as complete as it is the SUMMA THEOLOGIAE, the philosophy dependent on therefrom and the poetry pinned thereto and go to rest with John Donne in the tight little island of dreams where all past wealth is garnered; or face the barren waves— (B2: 7, 3)

Williams is talking about T. S. Eliot. In a characteristic swipe at his poetic *bête noire*, Williams criticizes Eliot's 'retreat' from life. This attack on Eliot relates to an earlier piece

(‘A Note on the Art of Poetry’) that Williams wrote for the fourth *Blues*. In that piece, Williams takes umbrage at ‘the voluntary spectacle T. S. Eliot has made of himself during the past year: the academic thing’ (B1: 4, 77). Williams equates Eliot’s retreat to classicism with academicism:

Next to the rascality of our legislative and judicial bodies the university, the true home of learning, is the worst scandal of our day. Never has it heralded genius. Always must it be broken into by men of genius before its check can be removed and thought advanced (B1: 4, 77).

According to Williams: ‘Its sole excuse and Eliot’s likewise must be that in certain seasons the intelligence goes into the spore stage for hibernation, getting a shell of high resistance. Eliot is tired’ (B1: 4, 77).

This snipe at Eliot’s alleged ‘tiredness’ is worth considering: both in relation to his piece in the seventh *Blues* and to Tyrus Miller’s theorization of late modernism. According to Williams, Eliot’s condition has taken a definitive turn for the worse in the time between the fourth and seventh *Blues*. Williams is now arguing that Eliot has been metaphorically laid to ‘rest’ in England: ‘the tight little island of dreams where all past wealth is garnered’. In this regard, when read alongside Williams’s instruction to ‘come over’, it does indeed seem as if a symbolic threshold of sorts has been reached by the time we reach the second volume of *Blues*.

Williams writes in his introductory piece of a ‘barren’ contemporary ‘world that has very much gone to pot’. In an unpublished piece written for *Blues*, Williams makes similar claims:

1. Agreed: That “Blues” is a perfectly hopeless attempt to put what is alive in writing before an american audience; it is a negative virtue but the only one that can be respected.
2. Resolved: There is nothing to do but to continue to do as now being done by “Blues”: it is the best present day tradition. The only one that can be counted on to bear anything but dry nuts.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ William Carlos Williams to Charles Henri Ford [undated]. Beinecke. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 189.

Once again, notice the emphasis that Williams places on the seemingly 'hopeless' state of affairs. Also note that Williams repeats the quietly defiant claims that he makes in his 'Introduction'. Whilst things may indeed be hopeless, magazines like *Blues* (i.e. those writing in the 'present day' modernist tradition) are the only ones 'that can be counted on to bear anything but dry nuts'.

'Here is a choice' (B2: 7, 3), writes Williams. Like Eliot, one 'may turn his face entirely from writing' (B2: 7, 3). Alternatively, one can 'continue to do as now being done' by younger writers like Paul Bowles:

No, and I shall not wait for you again
 Whilst you sit memorizing Donne
 And drinking goats' milk in the grove.
 There are chimes on windy heights
 There are winds on china cliffs.
 Why should I stand like a wistful virgin
 In a closed garden waiting for you
 While you play being oldfashioned
 In the darkgreen shadow of a glade? (B2: 7, 25)

The opening lines of 'Promenade des Anglais' can be considered a poetic response to the critical marker set down by Williams at the beginning of the seventh *Blues*. Eliot certainly seems to be lurking in the background – the mention of Donne is highly suggestive – of 'Promenade des Anglais'. For instance, the first line of Bowles's poem echoes the opening of Eliot's 'Ash Wednesday': 'Because I do not hope to turn again'.⁶⁸ Bowles's choice of title is also significant when considered in relation to the general tone of the poem. Echoing Williams, Bowles equates the old-fashioned with the old-worldly in 'Promenade des Anglais'. Moreover, it is clear that the speaker in 'Promenade des Anglais' does not want to tread the same path as Eliot:

No, I'm tired of being the passive element
 I'm tired of hearing your fingers snap
 And of feeling my muscles respond without volition (B2: 7, 25)

⁶⁸ Eliot, *Collected Poems*, p.95.

The speaker of these lines is evidently no longer content with mere passivity. The speaker in 'Promenade des Anglais' wants to affect a more active, *conscious* sort of literary intervention.

An active, conscious intervention is exactly what we get in the seventh *Blues*. Kenneth Rexroth was quick to recognize this at the time:

I have been thinking a great deal about Blues and the work it has been doing for U.S. letters. Certainly you would be making a great mistake to discontinue it, for it has been one of the most valuable, perhaps the most valuable, periodicals in a long, long time, and with the #7 it has really just begun. It seems to me that the first 6 numbers were primarily explorative, intent on discovering what exactly a new generation of writers wanted to say, both you and your contributors were in a sense feeling your way.⁶⁹

Rexroth praises Ford's editorial approach in the seventh *Blues*: 'Not until #7 does your editing become completely conscious in its selectivity (of course you had more time) and the work of your contributors in the majority of cases achieves at least a preliminary finish'.⁷⁰ Rexroth's account of Ford's conscious editorial approach rings true when we look at the seventh *Blues*. The seventh *Blues* is best understood as a conscious, confident – and by no means 'hopeless' (Miller) – response to the preceding six installments of Ford's magazine; and as a rejoinder to some of the more established practitioners – and modes – of modernism set out (or mimicked) in the earlier issues of *Blues*.

In contrast to the previous issues, the seventh *Blues* is assertive and visually arresting. In purely visual terms, compare Andrée Rexroth's artwork for the seventh *Blues* (figure 1) with the conservative design that featured on the covers of the preceding six issues (figure 2). Whereas the artwork the first six issues of *Blues* was relatively minimalistic, the design for the seventh wears its avant-garde credentials



(Figure 1)

⁶⁹ Kenneth Rexroth to Charles Henri Ford, 30 November 1929. Beinecke. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 157.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

proudly – if a tad self-consciously – upon its sleeve. Ford’s decision to radically rework the cover design of the magazine represents a statement of intent (one of many that we find in the seventh *Blues*). Rexroth’s cover is a visual marker that serves to differentiate the seventh *Blues* from the previous issues. When we open the magazine, we can see that the first fictional contribution to the seventh *Blues* functions in a similar fashion. Edgar Calmer’s ‘Any Given Segment’ is a scathing – and deliberately provocative – depiction of Parisian expatriatism:

by this time the lesbians will be up on the terrace of the deux magots, warming in the sun. myself rising and to the window, acutely hungover and with the threatened attack of falling of the face. before me in the courtyard all dank summer, sweating and rising in mist (B2:7, 4).

Having name-checked the famous rendezvous of the Parisian literary elite, Calmer decries ‘the indescribable clatter the absurd people. with comedy like that in the streets the theatre has a right to be bad in this country’ (B2: 7, 4). Calmer makes it perfectly clear that his fellow Americans dominate his immediate social milieu:

voices: “listen dearie maybe you haven’t a yen for me and maybe that’s too bad. but you can’t fix me you’re just as queer as I am dearie.” there was once a frenchman seen in this cafe but that was during the second empire and besides the wench he came to meet is dead. so are we all dead. I am dead. I have been dead three days and am just beginning to stench (B2: 7, 4).

Four significant things can be discerned in the above extract. Firstly, Calmer criticizes the apparent expatriate colonization of Paris. Once upon a time, in a long gone era, a Frenchman was seen in The Deux Magots. But certainly not in 1929 (Calmer is quite explicit about dates), as Americans now dominate the Parisian cultural scene. Secondly, consider how the story ends. In a turn of phrase that recalls Williams (on the ‘death’ of Eliot) and Miller (on the emergence of late modernist literature), Calmer’s ‘Any Given Segment’ closes with the suggestion that another sort of threshold has been reached. However, whether such a threshold can be crossed remains yet to be seen. After all, ‘Any Given Segment’ ends with the bleak admission that the narrator is himself three days dead: ‘just beginning to stench’.

Thirdly, consider the inherently queer and camp 'voices' that feature in the aforementioned extract from 'Any Given Segment'. Jaime Hovey has recently argued that queer 'modernist culture takes great pleasure in talking for its own sake'.⁷¹ Hovey suggests that the idle chatter produced by what she describes as logorrheic form of modernism 'takes great pleasure in its own performance, and suggests the perversity of this pleasure by insisting that it circulate as the spectacle of its own pleasure, already framed for an audience constructed as an in-crowd of participants'.⁷² According to Hovey, '[t]he pleasure of the talker taking pleasure in herself, and the audience taking pleasure in this pleasure, is then circulated as the foremost pleasure of art'.⁷³ In addition, '[h]earing one's self being heard, like seeing one's self seeing one's self, embraces self-consciousness as a strategy and pose'.⁷⁴ This deployment of self-consciousness as both a strategy and a pose is precisely what we get in 'Any Given Segment'. The simultaneously haughty and effeminate pieces of unabashedly voluble logorrheic chatter that punctuate the monologue of Calmer's narrative form part of 'a self-consciously theatrical stage patter that dramatizes abnormality, anxiety, effeminacy, and queerness'.⁷⁵ In turn, the self-consciously theatrical and effeminate pieces of 'stage patter' that feature in 'Any Given Segment' serves to differentiate *Blues* from first-generation modernist little magazines like Wyndham Lewis's *Blast* (1914-15). Whilst the antagonistic and oppositional editor of *Blast* sought to banish the 'effeminate lout within',⁷⁶ Ford seeks to open up a communal, inclusive textual space in which (queer) literary voices would be able to chatter and flourish without fear of chastisement or censorship.



(Figure 2)

⁷¹ Jaime Hovey, *A Thousand Words: Portraiture, Style, and Queer Modernism* (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2006), pp.50-1.

⁷² Hovey, *A Thousand Words*, pp.51-2.

⁷³ Ibid. p.52.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid. p.69.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Karin Orchard, 'A Laugh Like a Bomb': The History and the Ideas of the Vorticists', Paul Edwards (ed.), *BLAST: Vorticism, 1914-1918* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p.18.

Finally, mention should also be made of the American colloquialisms that interrupt Calmer's irritable, hung-over, and camp monologue. The American phrasing that punctuates 'Any Given Segment' is part of a more general move in the seventh *Blues* towards a more relaxed, natural, and demotic literary idiom.⁷⁷ The next story in the seventh *Blues*, William Closson Emory's 'The Boss' continues along similar lines:

With a clank and a crash and a bang. The tin is rattling on the highways. The cadillacs and the lincolns are coming. Vo-de-o-do-do. The guts of the detroiters are yammering for rum. From dawn to midnight here they come. Wake up old woman. Stir your fat stumps. Wipe the snot from your nose and give me one last yunkel and I'll be scuttling to the river (B2: 7, 5).

The scene that Emory depicts in 'The Boss' is industrialized and unmistakably American; the 'yammering' speech is undeniably demotic:

Get the hell over there who do you think you are mister ford? This is the ferry gents to starboard ladies to port and the river is wide and deep. I've an old lady at home myself. She loves to dump her rump into a pile of sheets and get a butthold. Some times she sweats. Sometimes the wind rumbles like a cyclone all night long. But what the hell gents what the hell (B2: 7, 5).

Closson's prose can be read as a response to the critical diatribe ('For a New Magazine') unleashed by Williams in the second *Blues*:

Some frank vulgarity even would be relief enough. This is what poetry might be. It is cramped now in diction, in a sight of the would, in everything that might be useful to us as free citizens of about the most helpless mass of human beings as ever cluttered up and spoiled a decent piece of country (B1: 2, 30).

Williams makes his feeling perfectly clear in the second *Blues*. He wants a demotic poetry freed from the constraints of 'diction' and the stifling, codified traditions of the old-world. For Williams, 'the alien pace of English, the perfections of its achieved poetic forms,

⁷⁷ It is important to remember that the general move towards a more prosaic idiom in the seventh edition of Ford's magazine is, in part, a reaction against the expatriate excesses detailed in the sixth *Blues*.

and the fixity of the idea of an elite culture, made the British model redundant'.⁷⁸ Williams wants something else entirely. Williams wants something approaching the condition of everyday American speech: something to which the 'most helpless mass' of 'free citizens' might relate.

Hence the request for some 'frank vulgarity' that he makes in *Blues*. And hence the appeal of pieces like Emory's 'The Boss' and Richard Thoma's 'Poem for R—'. Williams certainly would have approved of the opening lines of Thoma's 'Poem for R—'. Thoma's poem opens with a declaration of intent: 'This is the end of the beginning of the proem / And if you don't like it, you know what you can do—' (B2: 7, 6). Whilst the defiant tone of these opening lines soon dissipates, there is no mistaking the sentiment: the time for talking is over. Thoma's sentiment is shared by many of the other writers in the seventh *Blues*. As Paul Bowles writes in the second of his '3 Poems': 'Things must be made' (B2: 7, 26). In this regard, the contributors to the seventh *Blues* appear to respond directly to the earlier call made by Williams.

But this is not all. Bowles's assertion that 'Things must be made' chimes with Ford's previously expressed desire to 'build grandly the last madhouse for a burned dream'. That is to say, the shared emphasis that Bowles and Ford place on construction brings us back to the issue of the purported cultural renovation that the latter writer sought to bring about via the pages of *Blues*. However, the basic fact remains that although the many similar poetic and visual declarations that we find in the seventh issue are extremely useful when trying to establish continuities amongst otherwise divergent writers, they do not account for the eventual form that Ford's intended cultural renovation might assume. In order to do that, we need now to consider the scattered critical pieces that appear at the end of the seventh *Blues*.

The critical pieces in the seventh *Blues* are important for a variety of reasons. The non-fiction letters and comments tucked away at the back of the seventh *Blues* are important as they give support the suggestion that Ford's intended cultural renovation was far from 'helpless' (Williams) or 'hopeless' (Miller). However, the critical pieces in the seventh *Blues* do register a profound sense of dissatisfaction. Consider Harold J. Samelson's 'Paris Letter':

⁷⁸ Mike Weaver, *William Carlos Williams: The American Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1971), p.84.

Every gesture recalls another, long ago: a real one, felt, given and taken. Here nothing happens. And I read over old books or the best ones published last year. There is nothing new. No action, no thoughts are new. And my emotions recall the original disconcerting emotions I felt when I first knew the texts before me. It is spiritual dissipation. It is bad for the health (B2: 7, 36).

Having cited William Carlos Williams as an avant-garde 'touch-stone' (B2: 7, 36), Samelson's letter concludes with the downbeat assertion that 'Paris is quiet' (B2: 7, 38). A similar sentiment is also expressed in Sidney's Hunt's 'London, September 1929'. In his letter to Charles Henri Ford, Hunt criticizes 'the inevitable new standard of weakly modern good taste' (B2: 7, 39) currently being promoted by 'those circulantourists [sic] of whom we have more than our fair share' (B2: 7, 39) in England.

All things considered, the last few pages of the seventh *Blues* give credence to the view that the time is ripe for a refreshing burst of frank vulgarity or 'a belated whiff of to-hell-with-art propaganda' (B2: 7, 39). The sentiments expressed in the respective letters of Samelson and Hunt support the view expressed by Williams concerning the need for a specifically *American* kind of literary intervention. Hunt suggests as much in his letter to Ford:

Who wants a rock of ages? There is a good variety—Eliot's anglo-catholic royalist classicism, Wyndham Lewis' less ladylike alignment with Aquinas in torrents of words, Middleton Murray's hopeful it'll-all-come-right-in-the-end-somewhere-somewhen gropings in the infinite, expressed respectively in the CRITERION, THE ENEMY, NEW ADELPHI (B2: 7, 40).

Hunt was clearly not amongst those who wanted an aesthetic 'rock of ages'. Having criticized the 'sniffy earnestness & superciliousness' (B2: 7, 39) of a constrictive English literary culture, Hunt turns his back on that 'tight little island of dreams where all past wealth is garnered' (Williams) and sets his sights squarely on *Blues*.

Refocusing our attention on the contents of the seventh *Blues*, the question then arises: what does Sidney Hunt see? Does he see what Williams has been pushing for all along: that is, does he say a demotic version of modernism renovated along homegrown (i.e. American) lines? Yes and no. Many of the pieces in the seventh *Blues* wear their American influences on their poetic sleeves. This is especially true of Williams's

contribution to the seventh *Blues*: 'simplex sigillum veri: a catalogue'. Eschewing poetic artifice and rhetorical flourish in his 'catalogue' of quotidian artifacts, Williams demands that we 'keep things simple'⁷⁹:

an american papermatch pocket
closed, gilt with a panel insert,
the bank, a narrow building
black, in a blue sky, puffs of

white cloud, the small windows
in perspective, bright green grass
a sixinch metal tray, polished
bronze, holding a blue pencil (B2: 7, 9)

Unsurprisingly, given his dedication to an American aesthetic, the demotic scene that Williams evokes in 'simplex sigillum veri' is distinctively American.⁸⁰ At no point in his poem does Williams specify a precise geographical location, but his opening description of 'an american papermatch pocket' forges an immediate identification with America. Setting up this association from the outset, Williams establishes a framework of American points of reference through which we read his imagery of otherwise unidentified banks and 'narrow' buildings set against a backdrop of 'blue sky' and 'puffs of / white cloud'. Williams's poetic evocation of an urban American setting through his careful use of demotic language and everyday objects makes conceptual sense. Indeed, as Walter Benn Michaels writes, '[j]ust as in nativism the goal of the American is to be American, in Williams's modernism the goal of the American poet is to produce American poetry'.⁸¹

Williams's unshakable belief in the importance of a specifically 'American' poetry is useful. It distinguishes his aesthetic identitarianism from the nebulous outlook that Ford

⁷⁹ 'Keep things simple' is the English translation of the Latin phrase 'simplex sigillum veri'.

⁸⁰ Williams was a staunch believer in the importance of an original and authentically American poetry. However, Williams was also well aware of the difficulties facing those who would seek to 'invent' such a kind of poetry: 'Americans have never recognized themselves. How can they? It is impossible until some invents the ORIGINAL terms. As long as we are content to be called by somebody else's terms, we are incapable of being anything but our own dupes', William Carlos Williams, *In the American Grain* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), p.228.

⁸¹ Walter Benn Michaels, *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 1995), p.83.

sought to foster in the second volume of *Blues*.⁸² Just as Ford refused to remain in thrall to his modernist elders, we can see that in the seventh *Blues* he does not share Williams's belief in the existence of an 'original fibre'⁸³ determining the production of an authentically 'American' type of literature. The letters compiled at the end of the seventh *Blues* are important in this regard. Reading these scattered remarks and reflections, we get a clearer sense of the divergent aesthetics approaches favored by Williams and those promoted by Ford in *Blues*. What is more, it soon becomes clear that the version of American modernism promoted in Ford's second-generation little magazine would have surprised and perhaps disappointed Williams.

Included in the 'Round' section at the end of the issue, Kenneth Rexroth's 'Letter from San Francisco' is an indicator of the general move away from the aesthetic imperatives of Williams that takes place in the seventh *Blues*:

Since the war (which should have banished such ideas forever) nationalism has run rampant in U.S. criticism, [Matthew] Josephson and Williams, men for whom I have the greatest respect, are I suppose the most guilty. Just what they are talking about I don't know. The only art which is valuable because of its nativeness is that of peasants and savages (of course much of the work appearing in the periodicals of the avant-garde *is* produced by intellectual bushmen)... The stressing of peculiarly native elements in a work of art seems to me to be only playing into the hands of an imperialism on the lookout for apologists (B2: 7, 43).

Although his unreflective comments about 'peasants and savages' temper his purported critique of imperialism, Rexroth's 'Letter from San Francisco' remains a useful document when attempting to chart the shift away from the aesthetic 'nationalism' of Williams in the seventh *Blues*. Rexroth's concluding remarks are especially pertinent:

⁸² Michaels argues that 'what is striking about Williams's poetic is not its materialism—its commitment to the idea that the poem's identity consists in its material features—but its deployment of that materialism in the service of what should be called its *identitarianism*: its commitment to the idea that the success of the poem consists in the achievement of its identity', Michaels, *Our America*, p.83.

⁸³ Williams's account of the 'original fibre' of American literature is to be found in his essay on Edgar Allen Poe: 'This feeling in Poe's tales, that is, the hidden, under, unapparent part, gives him the firmness of INSIGHT into the conditions upon which our literature must rest, always the same, a local one, surely, but not of sentiment or mood, as not of trees and Indians, but of original fibre, the normal toughness which fragility of mood presupposes, if it will be expressive of anything—It is the expression of Poe's clearness of insight into the true difficulty, and his soundness of judgment', Williams, *In the American Grain*, p.230.

I was born in the well known middle west, I have been in every one of the 48 states and 2 territories, I know of nothing more beautiful, or of no people less objectionable, poetry today in America is about as vital as it has ever been in the history of the English speaking people (as vital, not necessarily as good), but when today someone tells me that my Duty Is To Express What Is Native To America, I am just a little afraid that tomorrow I shall be told to Go Back To Russia Where I Came From (B2: 7. 43).

Rexroth makes it clear that he believes modern American poetry to be absolutely 'vital'. At the same time, Rexroth makes it perfectly clear that he has no interest in supporting what he perceives as a nationalistic aesthetic agenda. It is Rexroth's subtle engagement with notions of nationalism that concerns us here. Born in South Bend, Indiana, Rexroth makes no bones about his humble mid-western origins in the otherwise decidedly cosmopolitan 'Letter from San Francisco'. However, having first staked his claim as a homegrown poet of the American mid-west, Rexroth goes on to assume Russian citizenship. Of course, the anarchist Rexroth's self-conscious association with Soviet Russia is an act of obvious political affiliation. At the same time, Rexroth recognizes that his particular brand of homegrown American poetry runs the risk of being misconstrued as ideologically unsound (i.e. unpatriotic). This raises interesting questions about what exactly constitutes an acceptable form of 'American' poetry.

Additional questions about the constitution of 'American' poetry also arise in Parker Tyler's contribution to the 'Round' table discussion in the seventh *Blues*: 'New York Notes'. Tyler's piece begins with a spirited defense of *Blues*:

The reason that this thing is so important, for the indefinite future as an extension of now, is that in America our culture is confused with things, such as advertising and bookselling clubs—I say "our" culture because if American-born writers are functioning in Europe, they are getting ahead of us, maybe, in reaping an extra spiritual benefit from a kinder environment of the spirit (B2: 7, 41).

Tyler seems almost to be channeling the voice of Williams in the opening lines of his 'New York Notes'.⁸⁴ And much like his modernist elder, Tyler is clearly of the opinion that Ford's

⁸⁴ Tyler's criticism of an American 'culture' that has been saturated by the damaging forces of mass media 'advertising and bookselling clubs' brings to mind the following lines in Williams's previously cited 'For a New Magazine': 'It's to make something new, something that make the dumbness of our environment articulate, by its words, by its form, by the release it gives to the insulted intelligence of

little magazine has an important role to play in the contemporary cultural affairs of America. Echoing Williams, Tyler sees Europe as more conducive to fostering a vibrant aesthetic sensibility and looks to Ford's *Blues* to encourage an equal – if not superior – atmosphere in America.

Yet, having gone to the trouble of outlining a case for the critical merits of *Blues*, Tyler's argument takes a peculiar and contentious turn: 'Indigenous culture is determined by the bloodbeat and the bloodbeat is personal-environmental. To have felt something, such as America, to have learned it and kept it as subconscious possession is factorial' (B2: 7, 41). Whilst the emphasis that Tyler places on the 'bloodbeat' of 'indigenous' American culture is certainly problematic if considered solely in relation to notions of primitivism, it is important to situate it in the wider context of his 'New York Notes'.⁸⁵ Tyler's somewhat deterministic declaration is followed by an immediate qualification:

It is true that a thing like poetry may skip geographical boundaries with no significant change, necessarily; the liability for either side of this statement depending on the state of growth within the poet and the interrelations of the places and the time through which he moves (B2: 7, 41).

In typically oblique language, Tyler is disputing the notion that 'a thing like poetry' is bound by geopolitical strictures. Instead, Tyler's assertion that a fluid thing like poetry can skip across arbitrary national boundaries implies a certain degree of geographical permeability. Tyler's remarks about geographical permeability pave the way for the appearance of something entirely different in *Blues*: a defamiliarized American poetry not bound by national boundaries or nativistic aesthetic imperatives. Adapting Paul Giles, we might say that the 'sharp antagonisms associated' with Tyler's recognition of the

people badgered by asinine lobbys [sic], newspapers which cannot rise above the phobias of its editors and employees. News of murders which if they were directed with anything but the crassest sense of proportion, the least lift from stupidity—might possibly stimulate us to something intelligent, but as it is sink us only the deeper in vulgarity and dullness' (B1: 2, 31).

⁸⁵ Tyler revisits similar themes in 'What are the New Directions?' (1940). In this densely worded and obscure piece, Tyler emphasizes that his conception of environmental factors has little to do with nationalistic assumptions about blood and soil: 'I have related the avant-garde to an environment, but I have also pointed out that the true environment of the avant-garde is spiritual, imaginative. Thus, primarily, its environment is that of the mind. Now the ability of the any individual mind to encompass, i.e., relate itself dynamically to, less immediate *mental* environments, both as to past and present, is not to be compared to the ability of the individual organism to relate itself dynamically to less immediate *physical* environments', Parker Tyler, 'What are the New Directions?', James Laughlin (ed.), *New Directions in Prose & Poetry* (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1940), p.249.

‘increasingly permeable boundaries of national identity produce a more complex and challenging terrain than older models predicated on relatively stable, reified understandings of any given national mystique’.⁸⁶ In this reading, it would seem that where Williams more closely represents the older model proposed by Giles, Tyler is more attendant to the challenges that come with complexities of unfixed or permeable national aesthetics. That is, in the words of Daniel Katz, Tyler’s emphasis on the fluid transmission of poetry across permeable national boundaries ‘serves to rehistoricize *all* languages, to deconstruct all effects of nativized authenticity’.⁸⁷

Such an emphasis is certainly in keeping with the outlook that Ford sought to foster in *Blues*. In his modernist little magazine, Ford sought to challenge assumptions about interwoven notions of aesthetic and nativized authenticity.⁸⁸ Intuitively recognizing the limitations of aesthetic outlooks predicated on fixed notions of nativized authenticity, Ford sought to foster an inclusive environment in which healthy, deformed, and defamiliarized versions of American literary modernism might flourish. As a result, the versions of American modernism that begin to emerge in the seventh *Blues* are neither prescriptively nor homogenously ‘American’. Rather, the demotic American idioms and poetic rhythms that we find in the seventh *Blues* are predicated on a notion of healthy mongrelization, or, in a phrase that recalls Young’s previously cited comments to Ford: *bastardization*.⁸⁹

This is certainly true of Ford’s contribution to the seventh *Blues*. Written by a homegrown Southerner, published in deepest Mississippi, and set in Chicago, Ford’s ‘Suite’ is undeniably American:

⁸⁶ Paul Giles, *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 2002), p.10.

⁸⁷ Katz, *American Modernism’s Expatriate Scene*, p.33.

⁸⁸ In this regard, Ford’s desire to challenge assumptions about nativized authenticity in his formative *Blues* could be said to anticipate Jahan Ramazani’s suggestion that ‘we need to remind ourselves constantly that the cultures, locations, and identities connected are themselves agglomerations of complex origin – though those earlier fusions have often been naturalized in ways that occlude the surprise or irony of their convergence’, Jahan Ramazani, *A Transnational Poetics* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2009), p.47.

⁸⁹ On a purely formal level, Kenneth Rexroth’s ‘Phronesis’ is a good example of the mongrelization that can be seen in the seventh *Blues*. Rexroth’s hybridized prose poem moves seamlessly from satirical discussions of Neo-Platonism to enthusiastic approximations of popular science fiction. Here is an example of the latter: ‘When the cub reporter’s buddy discovered atomic energy they left immediately for interstellar space. It was not until they landed on Mars that Dr. Fu Manchu emerged from the ice box’ (B2: 7, 27-28).

at night walking on michigan avenue nobody will see you for the automobiles rush by too fast and if you take it to your room it might say inaintnatural but anyway curse a in memphis who had the and if you don't believe it I'll show you (B2: 7, 31).

Functioning as textual markers, the locations specified in the above passage stress the Americanness of Ford's 'Suite'. In addition, Ford approximates the colloquial patterns of American speech in 'Suite':

if it gets too bad we'll stay drunk how many days and eat large tbonesteaks and then go to pieces. distriction won: boutiful she sad with her mith. there was a witwet on the drodress and i told her youre a biggirl noo: i set anna your a big curl now (B2: 7, 31).

Extracts like these highlight the homegrown aspect of Ford's Americanized 'Suite'. However, whilst the 'Suite' is certainly homegrown, the fact remains that the American scene in Ford's story cannot be understood without taking into account its essential foreignness. That is to say, Ford's American 'Suite' cannot be understood without recourse to its decidedly European origins. 'Suite' owes a clear debt to the Surrealist experiments carried out by writers like André Breton and Philippe Soupault. Ford achieves a disorientating, trance-like, and even hallucinatory state in the opening lines of his 'Suite' via the deployment of long, winding, and unpunctuated sentences. Once he has generated this trance-like effect (in language that consciously approximates Surrealist automatism), Ford alternates between longer sentences and shorter, demotic, and more declamatory statements. This syntactical variability serves to heighten the disorientating – even uncanny – sensation that one experiences whilst reading 'Suite'. All things considered, the formal patterning of Ford's 'Suite' reads as measured emulation of foundational Surrealist texts like Breton and Soupault's *Les Champs Magnétiques* (1920). And much like *Les Champs Magnétiques*, an internal logic and coherence underwrites the appearance of nonsensicality generated in Ford's 'Suite'. In this regard, Ford's 'Suite' reads as a hybridized mixture of American *and* European elements.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Bearing in mind the current discussion of aesthetic hybridization, consider the previously cited remarks of Roger Shattuck: 'Surrealism in the United States was from the start a *mongrel* in which native and foreign strains never blended completely'. Emphasis added.

This influence cuts both ways. In the same issue of *Blues*, we have Edouard Roditi's 'Séance'. Born in Paris, yet holding American citizenship from birth, Roditi was simultaneously a poet of the Continent and of the United States.⁹¹ Roditi wrote his early poetry in both English and French. Written in English, Roditi's brief prose piece 'Séance' is, if anything, even more heavily indebted to French Surrealism than Ford's 'Suite'. Structured around principles of surreal uncanniness and motifs redolent of Freudian psychoanalysis, Roditi's 'Séance' is indubitably Continental. And yet, the isolated figures that Roditi depicts as they wait in an unnamed train station departure room could easily have stepped out of a quotidian visual scene produced by that most American of painters: Edward Hopper. Thus by looking at pieces by 'American' writers like Ford and 'Continental' ones like Roditi, we might say that the contents of the seventh *Blues* are 'authentically' American yet not necessarily tied to nativistic conceptions of 'Americanness'. Putting it another way, we might say that whilst Ford did strive to put on a demotic 'local show' (Pound) in *Blues*, it was not of the variety hoped for by modernist elders like Williams.⁹²

Blues 2: 8-9 (Spring-Autumn 1930): Bread, Caviar, and the Problem of Patronage:

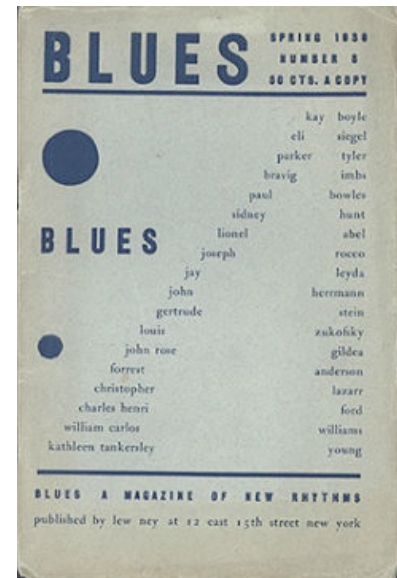
⁹¹ In the introduction to his selected poems, the Parisian-born Roditi emphasizes his Americanness: 'Among British and American poets of my own generation, I remain, of course, my favorite poet: if I were not convinced of the absolute value and importance of my poetry, I would long ago have ceased to take the trouble to write it, just as I no longer take the infinitely lesser trouble to read the work of poets whom I do not consider valuable or important', Edouard Roditi, *Poems: 1928-1948* (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1949), p.11. In addition, Roditi's biography brings to mind Daniel Katz's assertion that Americanness is a condition of 'originary cosmopolitanism', Katz, *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene*, p.32.

⁹² On a related note, an anonymously written *Blues* advertisement that was carried in Lincoln Kirstein's *Hound and Horn* (January-March 1931) emphasized the blend of simultaneously native, cosmopolitan, and international elements at work in Ford's modernist little magazine: '[*Blues* writers] are parts of the Δ which among the wagonwheels of Mississippi, the wide birds' wings of Manhattan and past the luminous eye of the Eiffel Tower has moved with that solidity perceptible to the imagination alone – and not only those but those who by the magnetic artificial axis of 227 Gilmer Bldg., Columbus, Mississippi, are building'. Quoted in Ford, *Scrapbook: 1928-1931*, Charles Henri Ford Papers, Beinecke.

Dispiritingly, Ford's attempt to renovate modernism along these homegrown, demotic, and defamiliarized lines proved to be short-lived. Turning our attention to the eighth and ninth *Blues*, it becomes apparent that a shift had taken place. This fact runs counter to Lew Ney's conception of the eighth *Blues*. In his preface, Ney argues that 'this number of *Blues* is not essentially different from the seven numbers that have preceded it' (B2: 8, 2). At face value, Ney's statement appears to be correct. After all, these two issues (figures 3 and 4) retain the newfound jaunty visual assertiveness characteristic of the seventh *Blues*. In addition, these two editions feature a number of the same writers present in the seventh issue. However, in spite of Ney's assertions, it is apparent that a change had taken place.

The figure of Ney (Luther Emanuel Widen) is himself important in this regard, as he helps us understand this shift. As his preface makes clear, Ney had become Ford's patron a few months prior to the eighth issue of *Blues*. To all intents and purposes, his patronage appears to have been positive. Ney's connections afforded financial relief and increased publicity for *Blues*. Ford's ability to secure this patronage also acted as a seal of approval from outside the immediate *Blues* community. But, with this patronage came the problem of enforced association. The importance of Ney's influence – both positive and negative – comes firmly attached to his reputation as the 'self-styled Mayor of Greenwich Village'.⁹³ In less favorable terms, this reputation translates into the walking cliché of Greenwich Village: the hackneyed bohemian aesthete.

Increasing association with Ney ultimately had detrimental consequences for both Ford and his magazine, as they became seen as literary organs of Greenwich Village. This association also saw an increase in the number of contributions from writers associated



(Figure 3)

⁹³ Anonymous, 'Lew Ney, Self-Styled "Mayor of Greenwich Village," Rewriting His "Mad Men", *The Courier*, Chatham (New York), Thursday 9 January 1930. As well as being the unofficial Mayor of Greenwich Village, New was also a writer, book designer, and printer for the Parnassus Press and later for the Alcestis Press.

with Greenwich Village.⁹⁴ Although in earlier times this would not have been a problem, by the time of production, the connotations attached to Greenwich Village were predominantly negative, stemming from the perception of the outmoded clichés of bohemian existence. Prominent contemporary critics like Malcolm Cowley reasoned that if 'the Village was really dying, it was dying of success. It was dying because it became so popular that too many people insisted on living there'.⁹⁵

In the minds of many other contemporary critics, Greenwich Village had already begun to 'die' before Ford arrived in New York.⁹⁶

The direction that *Blues* took in these latter issues seems to confirm Pound's greatest fears when he wrote in 'Program 1929' of impressionable 'young lads' (B1: 2, 29) being seduced by the bright lights of New York. Kathleen Tankersley Young had warned Ford in February 1929 about the dangers of being associated with the 'Village bunch'.⁹⁷ In addition, the increasingly self-conscious experimentalism that characterized the final two issues of Ford's little magazine led Williams, a previously staunch



(Figure 4)

⁹⁴ The eighth and ninth issues of *Blues* feature contributions from Greenwich Village affiliates like John Rose Gildea, Lionel Abel, Joseph Rocco, and Ben Maddow.

⁹⁵ Cowley, *Exile's Return*, p.65. Parker Tyler's account of Greenwich Village anticipates the views put forward by Cowley. In his 1929 'New York Notes', Tyler wrote that Greenwich Village had 'ceased to be more than a romantic memory. There has been an influx of bank clerks, gangsters and sharp real estate dealers. The proper people are becoming elegiac' (B2: 8, 41).

⁹⁶ 'When did the Village die? For Greenwich Village in its role of Latin Quarter is dead beyond a peradventure, succeeded by a quarter that is solidly bourgeois with its high-rent apartment buildings and disagreeably commercial with its tourist attractions. But the death of the Latin Quarter Village did not occur as early as some have dated it. Already in the Twenties there were those who said the "real" Village was dead. In *Love in Greenwich Village*, Floyd Dell gave 1924 as the date for the passing of the Village. This was to mistake his retirement to Croton-on-Hudson for the fall of the Village. Despite the defection of Dell and some other first-generation Villagers, the Village flourished and persisted throughout the Twenties and did not start until the Great Depression', Gorham Munson, *The Awakening Twenties: A Memoir-History of a Literary Period* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1985), p.77.

⁹⁷ 'I wish I was there because I would certainly like to steer you clear of that Village bunch, so you could someday be something besides a Village poet. But we all pass through that stage a little', Kathleen Tankersley Young to Charles Henri Ford, 7 February 1929. Beinecke. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 194.

supporter, to withdraw his support for *Blues* in 'Caviar and Bread Again: A Warning to the New Writer', citing what he saw as an increasingly self-conscious and clichéd experimentalism that could not be supported by the texts produced:

Experiment we must have, but it seems to me that a number of the younger writers have forgotten that writing doesn't mean just inventing new ways to say "So's your Old Man." I swear I myself can't make out for the life of me what many of them are talking about, and I have a will to understand them that they will not find in many another (B2: 8, 47).

In short, patronage and increased association with the Village scene stymied Ford's attempt to renovate modernism. Williams was not the only person to have negative views, as many contemporary critics followed suit. Having previously derided Ford's little magazine as mere 'fertilizer',⁹⁸ critics now began to write satirical obituaries for what they described gleefully as a prematurely 'decomposed'⁹⁹ *Blues*.

All of this led Ford to lash out at what he perceived to be petty prejudice and American provincialism:

...it is you and your fellows who make a vice of literature by assuming that it has the efficacy of a plough share; [...] you all are the trespassers, but as there are in america now among the younger generation one artist to forty farmers i assume that numbers will triumph, since, as you rightly divine, america deals always in size and never in quality being a big woman in a big bed with many little and inadequate husbands.¹⁰⁰

This situation finally prompted a frustrated and prematurely exhausted Ford to leave America.¹⁰¹ The whole experience had an indelible affect on Ford: one that was to echo throughout all of his later projects. Turning his back on notions of patronage and reductive

⁹⁸ Edward W. Titus, 'The Plight of Young Writers', *This Quarter*, p.190.

⁹⁹ Ralph Cheyney, 'Obituary and Annunciation', *Contemporary Vision* (Number 15) [undated]. Quoted in Charles Henri Ford, *Scrapbook: 1928-1931*, Beinecke.

¹⁰⁰ Charles Henri Ford, 'Correspondence', *The Left: A Quarterly Review of Radical & Experimental Art* (1: 2, 1931), p.92. The author extends his thanks to Michael A. Rozendal for providing this reference.

¹⁰¹ 'Having exhausted, to his own mind, the soul of *Blues*, and exhausted its body, limited by the architecture of America, arose (Ford) and to went to Europe its editor; having expanded his soul of the magazine to the novel, arose from his bed in Grove Street to climb into his bed in the rue du Bac, the novel of New York still under his pillow, the novel of New York like a passport to a certain stratum of society, especially Parisian society', Parker Tyler, *Acrobat in the Dark: a Metaphysical Biography* (unpublished manuscript). Quoted in Steven Watson, 'Introduction', Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, *The Young and Evil* (London: Gay Men Press, 1989), unpaginated.

categorizations (here being unfairly tarred with the Greenwich Village brush) Ford embarked on career path that refused to settle within a single aesthetic mode. Although Ford's initial attempt to renovate modernism was ultimately unsuccessful, it is precisely this failure that inspired him to perpetually self-renovate, continually making *himself* new. Like Freud's famous patients, this experience compels Ford to return to the site of his originary literary experience, as we saw in the first chapter with his final editorial venture a belated return to *Blues* itself: sixty years later in 1989.

Conclusion: A Record of Himself is All Any Man Records:

it's my own unspoiled creative force inching through life¹

The mixed success and largely indifferent – if not overtly hostile – reception of *Blues* reverberated throughout the career of Charles Henri Ford. Carrying with him the lessons learnt from *Blues* (some positive and some painful), Ford periodically sought to revisit the aesthetic agenda of this formative publication. However, none of Ford's subsequent attempts and career moves came close to equaling the sheer fearless – and perhaps naïve – ambitions of *Blues*. Instead, as we have seen, Ford undertook a series of more modest – yet equally significant – projects of self-renovation. These periodic attempts to make *himself* new sought to ensure Ford's continued aesthetic viability and relevance in an ever-changing field of cultural production.

Informed by his experiences during the brief existence of *Blues*, Ford developed a sociable type of aesthetic that refused to settle on a fixed mode of expression. In addition, the multiform dimensions of Ford's myriad aesthetic projects often contributed to his unwarranted marginalization in contemporary critical and historical reckonings. Ultimately, this marginalization overlooks the finer nuances of Ford's approach. By refusing to settle on a single form, and wishing to remain up to the minute, Ford ensured that he was consistently in dialogue with developments in various fields of cultural production during the 20th century. This willingness to engage in dialogue is the key to understanding Ford's sociable aesthetic approach. Always chattering away with diverse avant-garde and modernist contemporaries, Ford sought to draw together otherwise disparate forces into occasionally unexpected patterns of equivalence. In doing so, Ford recalibrates our expectations of critical frameworks. What is more, this desire for dialogue often opens up a demotic and democratic textual space where other voices are able to interact and express themselves.

This thesis has sought to recover and demonstrate the workings of this and other aspects of Ford's largely forgotten literary and aesthetic practices. By shedding critical light on Ford's hitherto unaddressed artistic practices, this thesis has aimed better to understand the underlying critical intentions and aesthetic interventions of this ambitious

¹ Charles Henri Ford, *Spare Parts*, unpaginated.

American poet. However, much more sustained critical work needs to be undertaken if we are fully to understand the lasting significance of this unfairly marginalized poet, artist, and editor. Should such critical work be undertaken, we might be even better placed to appreciate the ways in which this welcoming and sociable poetic figure encourages us to

Rest awhile! You rush like sun
over the insurmountable future.
Will me a memory to run
The other way – to meet you.²

² Charles Henri Ford, *The Overturned Lake*, p.73.

Works Cited:

Published Works by Charles Henri Ford:

- Ford, Charles Henri. *7 Poems*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Bardo Matrix, 1974.
- _____. 'Correspondence'. *The Left: A Quarterly Review of Radical & Experimental Art*. Vol. 1, No. 2, 1931: 92.
- _____. *Emblems of Arachne*. New York: Catchword Papers, 1986.
- _____. 'From *The Minotaur Sutra*'. *50: A Celebration of Sun & Moon Classics*. Ed. Douglas Messerli. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1995: 174-179.
- _____. 'Frustrations: Four From Tension'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 99-101.
- _____. *The Garden of Disorder*. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1938.
- _____. 'How to Write a Chainpoem'. *New Directions in Prose & Poetry*. Ed. James Laughlin. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1940: 369.
- _____. 'International Chainpoem'. *New Directions in Prose & Poetry*. Ed. James Laughlin. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1940: 370.
- _____. 'Lyric by Nine'. *New Directions in Prose & Poetry*. Ed. James Laughlin. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1940: 370.
- _____. *Om Krishna I: Special Effects*. New York: Cherry Valley Editions, 1979.
- _____. *Om Krishna II: from the Sickroom of the Walking Eagles*. New York: Cherry Valley Press, 1981.
- _____. *Om Krishna III: Secret Haiku*. New York: The Red Ozier Press, 1982.
- _____. 'One Hundred 69 Haiku for Charles Henri'. *Milk Magazine*. Vol. 3, 2001.
<http://www.milkmag.org/poetry3.htm#Charles%20Henri%20FORD>. Last accessed: 15 January 2011.
- _____. *Out of the Labyrinth: Selected Poems*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1991.
- _____. *The Overturned Lake*. Cincinnati: The Little Man Press, 1941.
- _____. *Public Haiku*. Undated. Accessed through:
<http://www.emilydickinson.org/titanic/material/ford.html>. Last accessed: 15 February 2011.

- _____. *Silver Flower Co.* New York: Kulchur Press, 1968.
- _____. *Spare Parts*. Athens, Greece: A New View Book, 1966.
- _____. 'Suite'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 2. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 31-32.
- _____. 'To Be Pickled in Alcohol'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 39.
- _____. *Water From a Bucket: A Diary, 1948-1957*. New York: Turtle Point Press, 2001.
- _____. & Parker Tyler. 'Duo No. 2'. *New Directions in Prose & Poetry*. Ed. James Laughlin. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1940: 371-72.
- _____. & Parker Tyler, 'What Happens to a Radical Literary Magazine', *The Sewanee Review*. January, 1931: 62-67.
- _____. & Parker Tyler, *The Young and Evil*. London: Gay Men Press, 1989.

Unpublished Works by Charles Henri Ford:

- Ford, Charles Henri. 'From a Record of Myself' [1948]. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Series 1, Box, 5, Folder 3.
- _____. *I Will Be What I Am*. Undated. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 4, Box, 21, Folder 2.
- _____. Letter to Nicolas Calas. 16 February 1965. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 7, Folder 6.
- _____. Letter to Arne Ekstrom. 10 February 1965. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 7, Folder 6.
- _____. Letter to Parmenia Ekstrom. 10 February 1965. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 7, Folder 6.
- _____. Letter to James Laughlin. 14 October 1951. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 7, Folder 6.

- _____. Letter to Edith Sitwell. 5 November 1947. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 7, Folder 10.
- _____. Letter to Gertrude Stein, 22 January 1931. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 7, Folder 12.
- _____. 'Notes on Neo-Modernism'. Undated. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 4, Box, 4, Folder 2.
- _____. 'Paris Letter For Vou'. Undated. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box, 4, Folder 6.
- _____. 'The Poem in Prose'. Undated. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box, 4, Folder 6.
- _____. *Scrapbook: 1928-1931*. Beinecke Library. Yale University. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Oversize, Box 6, Folder 327.

Other Published Material:

- Aaron, Daniel. *Writers on the Left: Episodes in American Literary Communism*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961.
- Altieri, Charles. *Enlarging the Temple: New Directions in American Poetry during the 1960s*. London: Associated UP, 1979.
- Andre, Michael. 'Ezra's Last Words'. *Unmuzzled OX 26 / Blues 10*, 1989: 78.
- Anonymous. 'Blues (advertisement)'. *transition*: No. 16-17. June 1929.
- Anonymous. 'Checklist for the Page as Alternative Space, 1909-1929'. *Franklin Furnace Flue*: Vol. 1, No. 2, 1980.
- Anonymous. 'Lew Ney, Self-Styled "Major of Greenwich Village," Rewriting His "Mad Men"'. *The Courier*. Chatham: New York, Thursday 9 January 1930.
- Arnold, David. *Poetry and Language Writing: Objective and Surreal*. Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2007.
- Ashbery, John. *Reported Sightings: Art Chronicles 1957-1987*. Ed. David Bergman. New York: Knopf, 1989.

- Barnett, Sarah. 'Galway Kinnell and Sarah Barnett Three Weeks After Chernobyl',
Unmuzzled OX: 25, 1988: 117-120.
- Bashkirtseff, Marie. *The Journal of a Young Artist, 1860-1884*. Trans. Mary Jane Serrano.
 Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Press, 2006.
- Bataille, Georges. *The Absence of Myth: Writings on Surrealism*. Trans. Michael Richardson.
 London: Verso, 2006.
- Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Trans. Howard Eiland & Kevin McLaughlin.
 Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2002.
- _____. *Berlin Childhood Around 1900*. Trans. Howard Eiland. Cambridge,
 Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 2006.
- _____. *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. Schocken Books: New York, 1968.
- Bennett, David. 'Periodical Fragments and Organic Culture, Modernism, the Avant-Garde,
 and the Little Magazine'. *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 30, No. 4, 1989: 480-
 502.
- Benstock, Shari and Bernard. 'The Role of Little Magazines in the Emergence of
 Modernism'. *The Library Chronicle of the University of Texas at Austin*, Vol.
 20, Vol. 4, 1991: 68-87.
- Bernstein, Charles. 'Objectivist Blues: Scoring Speech in Second-Wave Modernist Poetry
 and Lyrics'. *American Literary History*, Vol. 20, No. 1-2, 2008: 346-368.
- Bishop, John Peale. 'Chainpoems and Surrealism, 1940'. *New Directions in Prose & Poetry*.
 Ed. James Laughlin. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1940: 361-368.
- Bockris, Victor. *The Life & Death of Andy Warhol*. London: Fourth Estate Limited, 1998.
- Blom, Ina. 'How to (Not) Answer a Letter: Ray Johnson's Postal Performance'. *Ray Johnson:
 Please Add To & Return*. Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de
 Barcelona, 2009: 100-111.
- Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: a Theory of Poetry*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1973.
- Boone, Joseph Allen. *Libidinal Currents: Sexualities and the Shaping of Modernism*. Chicago:
 Chicago UP, 1998.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: a Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Trans. Richard
 Nice. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.
- _____. *The Field of Cultural Production*. Trans. Randal Johnson. Cambridge: Polity
 Press, 1993.

- _____. *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure in the Literary Field*. Trans. Susan Emanuel. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996.
- _____. *Science of Science and Reflexivity*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge: Polity, 2004.
- Bowles, Paul. 'P.B. In 1929'. *Unmuzzled OX 26 / Blues 10*, 1989: 56.
- _____. 'Promenade des Anglais'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 2. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 25-26.
- Breton, André. *Communicating Vessels*. Trans. Mary Ann Caws. Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1990.
- _____. *Mad Love*. Trans. Mary Ann Caws. Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1987.
- _____. *Manifestos of Surrealism*. Trans. Richard Seaver & Helen R. Lane. Ann Arbor: Michigan UP, 1972.
- Brakhage, Stan. *Essential Brakhage: Selected Writings on Filmmaking*. Ed. Bruce R. McPherson. New York: Documentext, 2001.
- Brandon, Ruth. *Surreal Lives: The Surrealists, 1917-1945*. London: Macmillan, 1999.
- Brooks, Cleanth. *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry*. Dennis Dobson: London, 1949.
- Brunner, Edward. 'Harry Crosby's "Brief Transit"'. 2001.
http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a_f/crosby/bio.htm. Last Accessed: 12 November 2010.
- Byrd, Don. 'The Shape of Zukofsky's Canon'. *Louis Zukofsky: Man and Poet*. Ed. Carroll F. Terrell. Orono: Maine UP, 1979: 163-187.
- Calmer, Edgar. 'Any Given Segment'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 2. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 4.
- Caws, Mary Ann. *The Surrealist Look: An Erotics of Encounter*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1997.
- Churchill, Suzanne W. *The Little Magazine 'Others' and the Renovation of Modern American Poetry*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006.
- _____. 'The Lying Game: Others and the Great Spectra Hoax of 1917'. *Little Magazines & Modernism: New Approaches*. Ed. Suzanne W. Churchill & Adam Mckible. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007: 177-196.

- Cohen, Ira. 'In Japan You Have the Right to Kill Someone Who Is Destroying Your Inner Space'. *Unmuzzled OX 26 / Blues 10*, 1989: 71.
- Comens, Bruce. *Apocalypse and After: Modern Strategy and Postmodern Tactics in Pound, Williams, and Zukofsky*. Tuscaloosa: Alabama UP, 1995.
- Cookson, William. *A Guide to The Cantos of Ezra Pound*. London: Anvil Press, 2001.
- Cowley, Malcolm. *Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s*. London: Penguin Books, 1994.
- Crosby, Harry. 'House of Ra'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 159-162.
- _____. 'Trumpet of Departure'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 130.
- Cummings, E.E. *is 5*. New York: Liveright, 1985.
- Dallek, Robert. *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995.
- Danto, Arthur C. *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History*. Princeton: Princeton, 1997.
- _____. *Andy Warhol*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2009.
- _____. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1981.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. Trans. Eric Prenowitz. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1998.
- Doolittle, Hilda. *Collected Poems, 1912-1944*. New York: New Directions, 1983.
- Dowell, James & Kolomvakis, John. *Sleep in a Nest of Flames: a Portrait of a Poet; a Portrait of a Century – the Documentary Film*. DVD. New York: Symbiosis Films, 2000.
- Doyle, Jennifer. 'Tricks of the Trade: Pop Art/Pop Sex'. *Pop Out: Queer Warhol*. Ed. Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley, & José Esteban Muñoz. Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 1996: 191-209.
- Eliot, T.S. *Collected Poems 1909-1962*. London: Faber and Faber, 2002.
- _____. *Selected Essays*. London: Faber and Faber, 1999.
- Emory, William Closson. 'The Boss'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 2. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 5.

- Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *This Side of Paradise*. London: Penguin Books, 2001.
- Frame, Allen. 'Charles Henri Ford'. *Journal of Contemporary Art*. <http://www.jca-online.com/ford.html>. Last accessed: 10 January 2011.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Penguin Freud Library Volume 14: Art and Literature*. Ed. James Strachey. London: Penguin Books, 1990.
- Fusco, Maria. 'Charles Henri Ford – Between Bridges'. *Frieze Magazine*, No. 112, January-February 2008. http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/charles_henri_ford/. Last accessed 21 January 2010.
- Garon, Paul, Franklin Rosemont, Penelope Rosemont. 'Surrealism: The Chicago Idea'. *The Forecast is Hot. Tracts & Other Collective Declarations of the Surrealist Movement in the United States: 1966-1976*. Ed. Franklin Rosemont, Penelope Rosemont, and Paul Garon: ix-xlii.
- Germain, Edward B. 'Introduction'. In Charles Henri Ford, *Flag of Ecstasy: Selected Poems*. Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1972: 7-11.
- Giles, Paul. *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 2002.
- Golding, Alan. 'The Dial, The Little Review, and the Dialogics of Modernism'. *Little Magazines & Modernism: New Approaches*. Ed. Suzanne W. Churchill & Adam Mckible. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007: 67-81.
- Golston, Michael. *Rhythm and Race in Modernist Poetry and Science*. New York: Columbia UP, 2008.
- Greenberg, Clement. *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Volume 1: Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944*. Ed. John O'Brian. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986.
- _____. *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Volume 4: Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969*. Ed. John O'Brian. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1993.
- Guilbaut, Serge. *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1983.
- Hall, Donald. *Reminiscences and Opinions*. New York: Harper & Row, 1978.
- Hamilton, Ian. *The Little Magazines: A Study of Six Editors*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976.

- Hinds, Michaels & Stephen Matterson. 'Introduction: A Speaking Whole'. *Rebound: The American Poetry Book*. Ed. Michael Hinds & Stephen Matterson. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004: 1-10.
- Hoare, Philip. 'Obituary: Charles Henri Ford – Enigmatic survivor of New York's Bohemian Surrealists'. *The Independent*, 1 October 2002.
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/charles-henri-ford-644148.html>. Last accessed: 14 October 2010.
- Hoffman, Frederick J., Charles Allen, & Carolyn F. Ulrich. *The Little Magazine: A History and Bibliography*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1947.
- Hovey, Jaime. *A Thousand Words: Portraiture, Style, and Queer Modernism*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2006.
- Hughes, Langston. 'The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain'. *Poetry in Theory – An Anthology 1900-2000*. Ed. Jon Cook. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004: 139-143.
- Hunt, Sidney. 'London, September 1929'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 2. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 39-40.
- Lowenfels, Walter. 'Antipodes'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 144-46.
- James, David E. 'Amateurs in the Industry Town: Stan Brakhage and Andy Warhol in Los Angeles'. *Stan Brakhage: Filmmaker*. Ed. David E. James. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2005: 61-77.
- Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 1991.
- Jancovich, Mark. *The Cultural Politics of the New Criticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993.
- Jenkins, Oliver. 'Confession'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 131-32.
- _____. 'Portrait of a Crusader Giving a Heart-to-Heart Talk'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 69.

- Jung, Carl Gustav. *Collected Works of C.G. Jung, Volume Seven: Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*. Trans. R.F.C. Hull. Ed. Sir Herbert Read. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953.
- Jolas, Eugene. *Critical Writings, 1924-1951*. Ed. Klaus E. Kiefer & Rainer Rumold. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2009.
- Jones, Amelia. *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994.
- Jones, Caroline A. *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 2005.
- Kachur, Lewis. *Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dalí, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001.
- Kalaidjian, Walter. *American Culture Between the Wars: Revisionary Modernism and Postmodern Critique*. New York: Columbia UP, 1993.
- Katz, Daniel. *American Modernism's Expatriate Scene: The Labour of Translation*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2007.
- Keller, Lynn. *Re-making it New: Contemporary American Poetry and the Modernist Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987.
- Kennedy, David. *An Interview with Kenneth Koch, 5 August 1993*.
<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88/koch.html>. Last accessed: 13 September 2010.
- Kenner, Hugh. *A Homemade World: The American Modernist Writers*. London: Marion Boyars, 1977.
- Kimmelman, Michael. 'Art in Review; Charles Henri Ford'. *New York Times*, 24 January 2003. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/01/24/arts/art-in-review-charles-henri-ford.html>. Last accessed: 8 December 2010.
- Kitaori, Asako. 'Charles Henri Ford: Catalyst Among Poets'. *Rain Taxi Review of Books*, Spring 2000. <http://www.raintaxi.com/online/2000spring/chford.shtml>. Last accessed: 15 September 2010.
- Koch, Stephen. *Stargazer: Andy Warhol's World and His Films*. London: Calder & Boyars Ltd, 1973.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1984.

- Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book X: Anxiety 1962-1963*. Trans. Cormac Gallagher. London: Karnac Books, 2002.
- Lautréamont, Comte de. *Maldoror and Poems*. Trans. Paul Knight. London: Penguin Books, 1978.
- Le Clercq, Jacques. 'Jordan Revolver'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 1-9.
- Lentricchia, Frank. *After the New Criticism*. Methuen & Co. Ltd: London, 1980.
- Leyland, Winston. *Gay Sunshine Interviews: Volume One*. San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1984.
- Luhmann, Niklas. *Art as a Social System*. Trans. Eva M Knodt. Stanford: California UP, 2000.
- Lyford, Amy. 'Noguchi's Multiform Modernism'. *Art Journal*, Vol. 65, No.4, 2006: 121-123.
- _____. *Surrealist Masculinities: Gender Anxiety and the Aesthetics of Post-World War I Reconstruction in France*. Berkeley: California UP, 2007.
- Ma, Ming-Qian. 'A "no man's land!": 'Postmodern Citationality in Zukofsky's "Poem beginning "The"'. *Upper Limit Music: The Writing of Louis Zukofsky*. Ed. Mark Scroggins. Tuscaloosa: Alabama UP, 1997: 129-153.
- Mac Low, Jackson. 'CXXIV'. *Unmuzzled OX: 23*, 1988: 14-17.
- Macleod, Norman. 'A Woman Swayed'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 72.
- Mahon, Alyce. *Surrealism and the Politics of Eros, 1938-1968*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2005.
- Malanga, Gerard. *10 Poems for 10 Poets*. Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1970.
- _____. & Andy Warhol, *Screen Tests / A Diary*. New York: Kulchur Press, 1967.
- Marks, Peter. 'Making the New: Literary Periodicals and the Constructions of Modernism'. *Precursors & Aftermaths: Literature in English 1914-1945*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 2004: 24-39.
- McKible, Adam. *The Space and Place of Modernism: the Russian Revolution, Little Magazines, and New York*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- McMillan, Dougal. *transition: the History of a Literary Era, 1927-1938*. London: Calder and Boyars, 1975.

- Merck, Mandy. 'Figuring Out Andy Warhol', *Pop Out: Queer Warhol*. Ed. Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley, & José Esteban Muñoz. Durham: North Carolina, 1996: 224-237.
- Michaels, Walter Benn. *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 1995.
- Michelson, Annette. "'Where Is Your Rupture?' Mass Culture and the Gesamtkunstwerk'. *Andy Warhol*. Ed. Annette Michelson. Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002: 91-108.
- Miller, Tyrus. *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, art the Arts Between the World Wars*. Berkeley: California UP, 1999.
- _____. *Singular Examples: Artistic Politics and the Neo-Avant-Garde*. Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2009.
- Moramarco, Fred. 'Concluding an Epic: the *Drafts and Fragments* of the *Cantos*'. *American Literature* 49: 3, 1977: 309-326.
- Morrisson, Mark S. *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception, 1905-1920*. Madison: Wisconsin UP, 2001.
- Mundy, Jennifer. 'Letters of Desire'. *Surrealism: Desire Unbound*. Ed. Jennifer Mundy. London: Tate Publishing, 2001: 1-54.
- Munson, Gorham. *The Awakening Twenties: A Memoir-History of a Literary Period*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1985.
- Neiman, Catrina. 'Introduction: *View Magazine*: Transatlantic Pact'. *View: Parade of the Avant-Garde 1940 1947*. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1991: xi-xvi.
- Ney, Lew. 'Preface'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 2. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 2.
- Nicholls, Peter. *Modernisms: a Literary Guide*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995.
- Nieland, Jutus. *Feeling Modern: the Eccentricities of Public Life*. Illinois UP: Urbana and Chicago, 2008.
- North, Michael. *The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth Century Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994.
- North, Jessica Nelson. 'Convention and Revolt'. *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, July 1929: 212-16.

- Oișteanu, Valery. 'Charles Henri Ford (1908-2002)'. *NY Arts*, December 2002:
http://www.nyartsmagazine.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1223:charles-henri-ford-1908-2002-by-valery-oisteanu&catid=39:december-2002&Itemid=682. Last accessed: 20 September 2010.
- _____. 'Dream'. *Unmuzzled OX 26 / Blues 10*, 1989: 70.
- Orchard, Karin. "A Laugh Like a Bomb': The History and the Ideas of the Vorticists'. *BLAST: Vorticism, 1914-1918*. Ed. Paul Edwards. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000: 14-23.
- Perelman, Bob. *The Trouble With Genius: Reading Pound, Joyce, Stein, and Zukofsky*. Berkeley: California UP, 1994.
- Perloff, Marjorie. 'Late Late Modern'. *William Carlos Williams Review*, Vol. 22, No.1, Spring 1996. <http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/perloff/parker.html>. Last accessed: 16 March 2011.
- Philpot, Clive and Lynne Tillman. 'An Interview with Charles Henri Ford: When Art and Literature Come Together'. *Franklin Furnace Flue*, Volume 1, No. 2, 1980: 1-2, 8.
- Pierre, José. *Investigating Sex: Surrealist Discussions, 1928-1932*. London: Verso, 1992.
- Pound, Ezra. *ABC of Reading*. New York: New Directions, 1987.
- _____. *The Cantos*. London: Faber and Faber, 1986.
- _____. *Literary Essays*. New York: New Directions, 1968.
- _____. *Ezra Pound to His Parents: Letters 1895-1929*. Ed. Mary de Rachewiltz, A. David Moody, Joanna Moody. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011.
- _____. *Personae: Collected Shorter Poems*. London: Faber and Faber, 1990.
- _____. *Pound / Zukofsky: Selected Letters of Ezra Pound and Louis Zukofsky*. Ed. Barry Ahearn. London: Faber and Faber, 1987.
- _____. 'Program 1929'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 29.
- _____. *Selected Letters, 1907-1941*. New York: New Directions: 1971.
- _____. 'Vou Club', *Townsmen*. January 1938: 4.
- Qian, Zhaoming. *Orientalism and Modernism: The Legacy of China in Pound and Williams*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 1995.

- Rainey, Lawrence. *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1998.
- Ramazani, Jahan. *A Transnational Poetics*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 2009.
- Ransom, John Crowe. *The New Criticism*. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1941.
- Rexroth, Kenneth. *American Poetry in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1973.
- _____. 'Letter from San Francisco'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 2. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 42-43.
- _____. 'Phronesis'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 2. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 27-30.
- Riding, Laura & Robert Graves. *A Survey of Modernist Poetry and A Pamphlet Against Anthologies*. Manchester: Carcanet Press Limited, 2002.
- Rifkin, Libbie. *Career Moves: Olson, Creeley, Zukofsky, Berrigan, and the American Avant-Garde*. Madison: Wisconsin UP, 2000.
- Roditi, Edouard. *Poems: 1928-1948*. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1949.
- _____. 'Séance'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 2. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 20.
- Rood, Karen L. 'Charles Henri Ford'. *Dictionary of Literary Biography: Volume 48: American Poets, 1880-1945*. Ed. Peter Quartermain. Detroit: A Broccoli Clark Book, 1986: 191-210.
- Rosemont, Franklin. *André Breton and the First Principles of Surrealism*. London: Pluto Press, 1978.
- _____. & Penelope Rosemont. 'Situation of Surrealism in the U.S. (1966)'. *The Forecast is Hot! Tracts & Other Collective Declarations of the Surrealist Movement in the United States: 1966-1976*. Ed. Franklin Rosemont, Penelope Rosemont, and Paul Garon. Chicago: Black Swan Press, 1997: 1-8.
- Sainsbury, Alex. 'Ray Johnson: Please Add To & Return'. *Ray Johnson: Please Add To & Return*. Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2009: 95-99.
- Samelson, Harold, J. 'Paris Letter'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 2. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 35-38.
- Saper, Craig J. *Networked Art*. Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2001.

- Sawin, Martica. *Surrealism in Exile and the Beginning of the New York School*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1995.
- Scherman, Tony & David Dalton. *Andy Warhol: His Controversial Life, Art and Colorful Times*. London: JR Books, 2010.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: California UP, 2008.
- See, Sam. 'Making Modernism New: Queer Mythology in *The Young and Evil*'. *English Literary History*, Vol. 76, 2009: 1073-1105.
- Shattuck, Roger. 'Introduction: Love and Laughter: Surrealism Reappraised'. Maurice Nadeau. *The History of Surrealism*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1968: 11-34.
- Shoemaker, Steve. 'Between Contact and Exile: Louis Zukofsky's Poetry of Survival'. *Upper Limit Music: The Writing of Louis Zukofsky*. Ed. Mark Scroggins. Tuscaloosa: Alabama UP, 1997: 23-43.
- Siebert, Bernhard. *Relays: Literature as an Epoch of the Postal System*. Trans. Kevin Repp. Stanford: California UP, 1999.
- Simmel, George. *The Sociology of George Simmel*. Trans. Kurt H. Wolff. Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1950.
- Simpson, David. *Situatedness, or, Why We Keep Saying Where We're Coming From*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 2002.
- Smith, Roberta. 'Charles Henri Ford – 'Printed Matter 1929-1969''. *New York Times*. 25 June 1999. <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/06/25/arts/art-in-review-charles-henri-ford-printed-matter-1929-1969.html?src=pm>. Last accessed: 10 January 2011.
- Sontag, Susan. *Against Interpretation*. London: Vintage, 1994.
- Spector, Herman. 'A Wohmmn'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 13.
- Stein, Gertrude. *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. London: Penguin Books, 2001.
- Stoicheff, Peter. *The Hall of Mirrors: Drafts & Fragments and the End of Ezra Pound's Cantos*. Ann Arbor: Michigan UP, 1995.
- Suárez, Juan A. *Bike Boys, Drag Queens, & Superstars: Avant-Garde, Mass Culture, and Gay Identities in the 1960s Underground Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996.
- _____. *Pop Modernism: Noise and the Reinvention of the Everyday*. Urbana and Chicago: Illinois UP, 2007.

- Tashjian, Dickran. *A Boatload of Madmen: Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde 1920-1950*. London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2001.
- _____. *Skyscraper Primitives: Dada and the American Avant-Garde*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan UP, 1975.
- Tate, Allen. *Essays of Four Decades*. London: Oxford UP, 1970.
- Terrell, Carroll F. *A Companion to The Cantos of Ezra Pound*. Berkeley: California UP, 1993.
- Thoma, Richard. 'Poem for R—'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 2. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 6-7.
- Tiffany, Daniel. *Radio Corpse: Imagism and the Cryptaesthetic of Ezra Pound*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1995.
- Titus, Edward W. 'The Plight of Young Writers'. *This Quarter*. Vol. 2, No. 2, October-December, 1929: 189-192.
- Tracy, Steven C. *Langston Hughes and the Blues*. Chicago: Illinois UP, 1988.
- _____. 'William Carlos Williams and Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms'. *William Carlos Williams Review*. Vol. 15, No. 2, Fall 1989: 17-29.
- Treece, Henry. *The Crown and Sickle: An Anthology*. London: P.S. King & Staples Limited, 1943.
- Tyler, Parker. 'Frustrations: From a Slender Coffin'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 96-98.
- _____. 'Hollywood Dream Suite'. *Modern Things*. Ed. Parker Tyler. New York: Galleon Press, 1934: 83.
- _____. 'Introduction'. *Modern Things*. Ed. Parker Tyler. New York: Galleon Press, 1934: 5-12.
- _____. 'New York Notes'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 2. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 41-42.
- _____. 'Preface' [to 'A Little Anthology of the Poem in Prose']. *New Directions XIV*. Ed. James Laughlin. London: Peter Owen, 1953: 330-36.
- _____. 'Sonnet'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 50-51.
- _____. *Vision: Argument by Anti-Poem*. New York: Privately Printed, 1934.

- _____. 'What are the New Directions?' *New Directions in Prose & Poetry*. Ed. James Laughlin. Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions, 1940: 247-256.
- _____. *The Will of Eros: Selected Poems 1930-1970*. Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1972.
- Tzara, Tristan. *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries*. Trans. Barbara Wright. John Calder: London, 1977.
- Vail, Laurence. 'Meek Madness in Capri or Suicide for Effect'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 152-158.
- Vidler, Anthony. *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001.
- Vogel, Joseph. 'Literary Graveyards'. *New Masses*, October 1929: 30.
- Warhol, Andy & Pat Hackett, *POPism*. London: Penguin Books, 2007.
- Watney, Simon. 'Queer Andy'. *Pop Out: Queer Warhol*. Ed. Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley, & José Esteban Muñoz. Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 1996: 20-30.
- Watson, Steven. 'Introduction'. Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, *The Young and Evil*. London: Gay Men Press, 1989: unpaginated.
- Weaver, Mike. *William Carlos Williams: The American Background*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1971.
- Whiting, Cécile. *A Taste for Pop: Pop Art, Gender, and Consumer Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997.
- Wilcock, John. *The Autography and Sex Life of Andy Warhol*. New York: Trela Media LLC, 2010.
- Williams, William Carlos. 'A Note on the Art of Poetry'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 77-79.
- _____. 'Caviar and Bread Again'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 2. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 46-47.
- _____. 'For a New Magazine'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 30-32.
- _____. *In the American Grain*. London: Penguin Books, 1971.

- _____. 'Introduction to a Collection of Modern Writings'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 2. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 3.
- _____. 'Simplex Sigillum Veri: a Catalogue'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 2. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 9-10.
- _____. *Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams*. New York: Random House, 1954.
- _____. *Something to Say: William Carlos Williams on Younger Poets*. New York: New Directions, 1985.
- Wilson, William S. *With Ray: The Art of Friendship*. Black Mountain, North Carolina: Black Mountain College Museum and Arts Center, 1997.
- Wimsatt, W.K. & Monroe C. Beardsley, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry*. Kentucky: Kentucky UP, 1954.
- Wixon, Douglas. *Worker-Writer in America: Jack Conroy and the Tradition of Midwestern Literary Radicalism, 1898-1990*. Chicago: Illinois UP, 1990.
- Wolf, Reva. *Andy Warhol, Poetry, and Gossip in the 1960s*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1997.
- _____. 'Collaboration as Social Exchange: *Screen Tests / A Diary* by Gerard Malanga and Andy Warhol'. *Art Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 4, Winter 1993: 59-66.
- Woods, Tim. *The Poetics of the Limit: Ethics and Politics in Contemporary American Poetry*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.
- Young, Kathleen Tankersley. 'Six Poems'. *Blues: A Magazine of New Rhythms*. Vol. 1. Ed. Charles Henri Ford. New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967: 10-11.
- Zukofsky, Louis. *Complete Short Poetry*. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1997.

Other Unpublished Material:

- Andre, Michael. E-mail to the author. 29 January 2011.
- _____. E-mail to the author. 5 February 2011.
- Berrigan, Ted. Letter to Charles Henri Ford. 26 April 1965. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 12, Folder 2.

- Bowles, Paul. Letter to Charles Henri Ford. 18 March 1964. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 12, Folder 6.
- Johnson, Ray. Letter to Charles Henri Ford. Undated. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 14, Folder 2.
- Malanga, Gerard. Letter to Charles Henri Ford. 13 December 1963. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 14, Folder 3.
- _____. Letter to Charles Henri Ford. 24 April 1964. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 14, Folder 3.
- _____. Telephone interview with the author. 3 September 2010.
- Pound, Ezra. Letter to Charles Henri Ford. 24 November 1930. Beinecke Library. Yale University. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 144.
- Ransom, John Crowe. Letter to Charles Henri Ford. 25 March 1939. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 14, Folder 5.
- _____. Letter to Charles Henri Ford. 1 December 1939. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 14, Folder 5.
- Rexroth, Kenneth. Letter to Charles Henri Ford. 30 November 1929. Beinecke Library. Yale University. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 157.
- Thomas, Dylan. Letter to Charles Henri Ford. 14 December 1939. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 2, Box, 15, Folder 3.
- Tillman, Lynne. Telephone interview with the author. 24 November 2010.
- Tyler, Parker. 'Charles Henri Ford: From Poet to Graphipoet' [1965]. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 3, Box, 18, Folder 4.

- _____. Letter to the Editors of the English Journal [1931]. Beinecke Library. Yale University. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 176.
- _____. Letter to Ezra Pound. Undated. Beinecke Library. Yale University. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 176.
- _____. 'Imaginary Conversation between Mr. E. E. Cummings and the Editors of BLUES'. Undated. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 3, Box, 19, Folder 2.
- _____. 'Program'. Undated. Harry Ransom Center. The University of Texas at Austin. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 3, Box, 19, Folder 3.
- Williams, William Carlos. Letter to Charles Henri Ford. Undated. Beinecke Library. Yale University. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 189.
- Young, Kathleen Tankersley. Letter to Charles Henri Ford. 7 February 1929. Beinecke Library. Yale University. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 194.
- _____. Letter to Charles Henri Ford. 22 March 1929. Beinecke Library. Yale University. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 189.
- _____. Letter to Charles Henri Ford. 4 April 1929. Beinecke Library. Yale University. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 189.
- _____. Letter to Charles Henri Ford. 20 April 1929. Beinecke Library. Yale University. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 189.
- _____. Letter to Charles Henri Ford. Undated. Beinecke Library. Yale University. YCAL MSS 32. Charles Henri Ford Papers. Series 1, Box 2, Folder 189.